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BIRD IN HAND

BIRD IN HAND

A Play in Three Acts

BY

JOHN DRINKWATER



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1929

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TO
R. B. McK.

AND
F. S.

FROM THE THIRD IN A LONG
AND HAPPY PARTNERSHIP

Bird in Hand was first produced at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre on Saturday, September 3, 1927, under the direction of the Author, with the following cast:

Joan Greenleaf

PEGGY ASHCROFT

Alice Greenleaf

CARRIE BAILLIE

Thomas Greenleaf

PERCY RHODES

Gerald Arnwood

LAWRENCE OLIVIER

Mr. Blanquet

IVOR BARNARD

Cyril Beverley

CHARLES MAUNSELL

Ambrose Godolphin

FRANK RANDELL

Sir Robert Arnwood

ROBERT LANG

BIRD IN HAND

THE CHARACTERS ARE

JOAN GREENLEAF

ALICE GREENLEAF (*her mother*)

THOMAS GREENLEAF (*her father*)

GERALD ARNWOOD

MR. BLANQUET

CYRIL BEVERLEY

AMBROSE GODOLPHIN, K.C.

SIR ROBERT ARNWOOD (*Gerald's father*).

SCENE: *The 'Bird in Hand' Inn*

ACT I: *The Bar Parlour (evening)*

ACT II: *Beverley's Bedroom (the same night)*

ACT III: *The Bar Parlour (the next morning)*

NOTE ON THE ASPIRATE

THE uncertainty of Thomas and Blanquet as to the aspirate is confined to its omission; they never place one where it should not be. And, as is usually the case, there is no consistency in their practice. Sometimes they drop the 'h,' sometimes not, in the same word. In the countryman's soft articulation the omission is hardly noticeable, and not unpleasing to the ear, while in Blanquet's harder cockney speech it is more evident and sometimes a definite offence against euphony.

BIRD IN HAND

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ACT I

A country inn ('Bird in Hand') bar parlour in the English midlands. A summer evening. The landlord, THOMAS GREENLEAF, his wife ALICE and their daughter JOAN, are finishing high-tea. THOMAS is sixty-five, ALICE forty-five, and JOAN twenty.

Joan: Shall I ask father, Mum?

Alice: Yes, I should.

Joan: You haven't told him?

Alice: No.

Joan (to her father): Mrs. Lancaster is starting a dancing class in Gloucester on Thursday evenings. Can I go?

Thomas: But you dance well enough as it is, girl.

Joan: This is for ballet dancing.

Thomas: Ballet dancing? What do we want with that in Gloucestershire?

Joan: I don't know — it's just fun. A teacher is coming down from London. Mrs. Lancaster is going to pay for it — it won't cost us anything.

Thomas: I don't see —

Alice: I should let her go, Thomas —

Thomas: You would. And like enough you'd want to go yourself. You always were new-fangled.

Alice: I married you twenty years ago. I was twenty-five, you were forty-five. New-fangled — nonsense. But I don't see why she shouldn't be.

Thomas: Isn't ballet that without any skirts on?

Joan: Well, what of that?

Alice: One would think you were ninety, Thomas, instead of sixty-five.

Thomas: I've been churchwarden here for thirty-three years.

Joan: But I tell you it's Mrs. Lancaster herself.

Thomas: Being parson's wife don't make no skirts godly. She goes about herself in a way that isn't righteous.

Alice: Don't be silly, Thomas. You know you like it.

Thomas: I do not. (*A pause.*) I'm too old.

Joan: But I'm not. Do be a decent daddy.

Thomas: That's just what I do make for to be. Decent — a proper lot of decency there'll be left soon in this part of Gloucestershire if this sort of thing goes on. A back number — that's what I be.

Joan: You're not, and you're not going to be. You're just going to keep up with the times.

Thomas: I won't keep up with no times. I think they're idolatrous times. We've made fifty commandments where there was ten, and we break the lot. And now we're talking, I won't have you carrying on with Mr. Gerald either.

Joan: I'm not carrying on with Gerry.

Thomas: Who's Gerry?

Joan: Gerald.

Thomas: Is he going ballet dancing too?

Joan: It's only for ladies.

Thomas: You may call it that. But look here, my girl, class is class, even though the Liberals aren't sure whether they're Tories or Socialists. The Arnwoods have been at Bell Croft three hundred years. We've been at the 'Bird in Hand' pretty near as long. And we've always known who was who, and which hat fitted which head. Your mother teased me into sending you to a High School, and now you don't know whether you're my daughter or the 'Unt Steeplechase or Lottie Collins. Gerald Arnwood's no good to you, and if you don't tell him so, I will.

Alice: Lord, Thomas, how you go on! Mr. Arnwood has merely been civil to the child.

Thomas: Civil? In a Rolls Royce motor-car? There was an Arnwood here eighty years ago was civil to my great-aunt. That was in a gig. My grandfather was like to lose his license over it. Does Mr. Gerald want to marry the girl?

Joan (rising and moving from the table): I wish you wouldn't talk like this.

Thomas: Well, does he?

Joan: What do you mean? There's no question of it.

Thomas: No, there wouldn't be.

Joan: Don't say things like that.

Thomas: No. 'Old my tongue, I suppose. I'm not up to date. Things aren't like what they used to be, are they? We're advancing. Yes. Young women can look after themselves nowadays, can't they? They can afford to wear short skirts because things have changed so much, haven't they? Young men aren't what they were — oh no! You couldn't beat nature in a gig, but we're too smart for 'er in a Rolls Royce motor-car.

We're educated. Well, nature ain't educated, and never will be. I'm old-fashioned. So's nature. You can't get the best of 'er, and you ain't going to get the best of me.

Alice: But why all this fuss? There's nothing wrong, is there?

Joan: Of course there isn't. I've been out for a ride with Gerry two or three times, that's all. I think it's vulgar to speak of it, but if you must know, the chauffeur has always been there. We've made no secret of it.

A motor-horn is heard outside.

Thomas: Seemingly.

GERALD ARNWOOD *has come through the bar and stands at the parlour door. He is a clean, sensible-looking young man of twenty-five, attractive and confident.*

Gerald: Oh, forgive me. Good-evening, Mrs. Greenleaf, — Mr. Greenleaf. I have to go over to Ciceter. I wondered whether Joan would care for a drive. It's a lovely evening.

Thomas: I don't think Joan was going out this evening.

Joan (trying to carry it off): Oh, I'd love to — I won't be two minutes —

Thomas (definitely): No, Joan isn't going out this evening.

Gerald: I'm sorry — I didn't suppose —

Thomas: No, Mr. Gerald, you didn't suppose anybody would mind what anybody does these days, did you? Well, I do.

Gerald: But really — I mean to say — you know —

Thomas: I'm not saying there's anything wrong, but likewise I'm not going to say that what might be wrong is right.

Gerald: Truly, I don't understand. Joan has been good enough to come for a ride once or twice with me. We — we supposed that was all right. I'm sure she didn't think you would mind.

Thomas: I do.

Gerald: Of course, then — I mean to say ——

Joan: Gerry, you're not going to let it go at that?

Gerald (bracing himself): Honestly, Mr. Greenleaf, I don't see why you should object.

Joan: Not to mention that you're making everyone excessively uncomfortable.

Thomas: May I ask why you asked my leave at all to go high-kicking in Gloucester?

Joan: Because I thought it right to.

Thomas: You mean you thought it right to tell me you were going.

Joan: I don't know why you should make everything so difficult. Here we all are suddenly getting square-jawed about nothing.

Alice: It is rather ridiculous, Thomas. And very embarrassing for Mr. Gerald.

Thomas: I know — I'm making a scene. And you, miss, say it's about nothing. Well, I'd rather make a scene about nothing than wait until there's something to make a scene about.

Gerald: Really, Mr. Greenleaf, I don't intend anything of the sort ——

Thomas: What do you intend?

Gerald: Just to drive to Ciceter.

Thomas: Your great-grandfather drove Joan's great-grand-aunt one summer's night to Chalford. And when the trouble came, my grandfather cursed him out in that market-place. That couple went off that summer's night furtively, unbeknownst to anyone. You're not furtive, you come in here bold as you like; you're the new generation, both of you, that hides nothing and is ashamed of nothing. But is my Joan a pretty girl or is she not? And is a summer night the same as it was eighty years ago? And are you made of duller stuff, Mr. Gerald, than your great-grandfather was? What difference do your openness and your free-and-easy ways make? We change our manners, but we don't change ourselves, not when it comes down to men and women and suchlike. Joan thinks she don't need protecting; she thinks she knows all about everything — they all do. You think that because you come in open like this with an easy conscience, instead of hanging round the corner like he did knowing he was stealing something, there's no danger. But the danger's there just the same. Do you want to marry my girl?

Joan: Father ——

Thomas: No, damme, does he?

Gerald (moving): Perhaps I'd better ——

Joan: Perhaps it's as well we're not ashamed of anything.

Thomas: Or you might be ashamed of me.

Joan: That's not fair; you know I don't mean that. I might be ashamed for myself. You're asking Gerry to marry me, and we hadn't even ever thought of it.

Thomas: I'm not asking him to do anything of the sort. I'm reminding him of something he had for-

gotten — that he wouldn't marry you. That's right enough — it's not his place to. And by the token I don't mean that it shall be his place to do something he won't.

Joan (after a moment's deliberation): You understand, Gerry, don't you, that I wouldn't marry you?

Gerald: Yes — er — quite so. Honestly, you know, I don't see what it's up to me to do at this point of the proceedings.

Joan: You're going to drive me to Ciceter.

Gerald: But after what Mr. Greenleaf has said ——

Joan: Please.

Gerald: If you say so. I'll just put the hood up. It may get cold.

Joan: Can't Jarvis do that?

Gerald: I didn't bring Jarvis out. I thought I'd drive myself. I shan't be a minute.

Making what salvage he can of the situation, he goes out.

Thomas: He didn't bring Jarvis out.

Joan: Well, it's the first time. Not that it means anything.

Thomas: I suppose I'm not allowed to say anything more.

Joan: I'm sorry, Father, but what else could I possibly do?

She goes out by the stair door.

Alice: She's right.

Thomas: Right. My father would have turned her out into the street for it.

Alice: You complain that times have changed, and yet you won't admit it. You couldn't expect her to

give way like a frightened child just because you scolded. Children aren't frightened any more.

Thomas: There's things we're meant to be afraid of, so as we may keep 'em away from us. You were educated. I wasn't. And the girl's educated beyond you. She's modern. They look at things differently. Very well, let them. But the things are the same. I've no use for folks as thinks all the time of the way they're looking at things and forgets the things they're looking at. I want — what do I want? I want my girl to be happy — something just so old-fashioned as that. I know — happiness now is a matter for fine argyment, all intelleck. But I know that she won't be happy if she gets tangled up with a man out of her own station as no more thinks of marrying her than he does of keeping the 'Bird in Hand.'

Alice: But after all, why shouldn't he?

Thomas: Because that's another of the things that doesn't change. Unless it's for the wuss.

JOAN returns, with her hat and wrap on.

Joan: Bye-bye, Mum. I shan't be long.

She goes up to her Father.

Don't be so very heavy about it, Daddy. It's quite all right, you know.

She goes out. A moment later the car is heard moving away.

Thomas: Do you hold with that? Setting herself up against me? It seems you do.

Alice: She's not. At least, not about anything that makes any weight. And you did drive her.

Thomas: What are you going to do about it now?

Alice: You mean what are they going to do about it.

Thomas: Suppose I said let her go and dance herself silly in Gloucester? Suppose I said the 'Bird in Hand' as was kept by a Greenleaf under King George the First isn't fine enough for her any longer?

Alice: Then you would be a daft old man, and you aren't.

Thomas: Well, what am I to do? I say what I thinks right, and I get no notice taken. Where do I be? And why don't you say something? What do you think? I sometimes think you don't think anything at all. Dumb as a doorpost.

He is filling and lighting a pipe while his wife clears the table.

Alice: I think plenty. You mean, I don't think like you think. Or perhaps it's feeling. Argument doesn't get us far. We've argued for twenty years.

Thomas: Haven't we come through pretty well?

Alice: We have. Because we've felt right about each other — in spite of argument, not because of it.

Thomas: Well, is the girl to do as she likes, or as I tell her?

Alice: What did I do?

Thomas: Your father was a cussed old mule, and you know it.

Alice: Yes. I don't suppose Mr. Gerald would ever put it quite that way to Joan.

Thomas: Are you suggesting —

Alice: Of course you're not. Just a little determined, that's all. But then Joan is determined. I was. And there was a lot of pulling against you, Thomas, masterful as you were. I was very fond of the circus. I loved the sawdust and the steaming horses, and the sunlight

making a pathway across the tent, and the clowns clapping their hands, and the cracking of the whips, and the jog-jog-jog-clumpety-clumpety-jog-jog-jog-clumpety-clumpety as the riders went round the ring. You had to be a fine fellow, Thomas, to take me away from it.

Thomas: A very middling sort of circus it seemed to me. No elephants, and the only piebald you had was blind of an eye.

Alice: Circuses are circuses. To me it was the best circus in the world. They sent me away to be educated — and I had to go back. Nothing could make me leave it, not till you came. My, but I was in love with you.

Thomas: Like enough. I was pretty far gone myself for the matter of that. Still am, for an old un. What does that hussy want to go and vex me for like this? Makes me smoke wet, so as I can't enjoy it.

He puts his pipe on the mantelpiece.

Alice: The girl's good enough, so why worry?

Thomas: I've never learnt that goodness was any particular good for keeping people out of trouble. Besides, it wasn't good, going off like that. She ought to be dutiful to her God.

Alice: Yes, but you aren't God, Thomas.

Thomas: Now don't you be profane. You ought to help me with advice, instead of standing against me. But I haven't got anyone to advise me. Not that I want advising, mind you. I know.

Alice: Well, what shall you do?

Thomas: Because I know, it don't follow that I know what to do. There aren't any rules nowadays about

what to do anyway. Not as anyone takes any notice of.

Alice: Then I should let it alone.

Thomas: I've got no option. And a pretty fool I feel about it. But I'm a righteous fool I'd have you know. And that's about all the comfort I got.

He lights his pipe again.

Between the parlour and the outer bar is a small window beyond a flap-shelf that serves as the office desk of the inn. A man's head now appears at the window.

Mr. Blanquet (very small and mild, with a slight cockney accent): Good-evening. I think you have a room for me.

Alice: Are you Mr. Blanket?

Mr. Blanquet: Most people call it that. But it's really Blanquet. My father was of French descent. A long time ago. You wouldn't notice it.

Alice: I beg your pardon. Yes, the room is ready. Would you like to go to it now?

Mr. Blanquet: No, it doesn't matter, thank you.

Thomas: Come in, if you please.

Alice: I'm afraid we have no special sitting-room for guests.

Mr. Blanquet (coming in): That suits me fine. I like company. Get lonely, you know, travelling about. My district's rural. Not very chatty. Not but what I like nature. In fact, I'm a bit of a naturalist. I collect mosses.

Thomas: What do you do with them?

Mr. Blanquet: I label them and put them in a box.

Alice: How nice.

Mr. Blanquet: It is. I like doing it because it doesn't mean anything. So much means something, doesn't it, that it's very bewildering. Mosses don't argue. I don't pretend to be scientific about it.

Thomas: It isn't your business then?

Mr. Blanquet: Oh no; I travel in sardines. The Blue Fin variety. "See the fin On the tin" — That's our slogan. You won't 'ave heard of 'em yet. We're just starting the campaign. Very tasty. And it's the cheapest brand on the market. With sauce or without. And a special patent for opening the tin. Safety first. Pardon me for talking shop.

Alice: It's very interesting, I'm sure.

Mr. Blanquet: Fine old house you've got here. Tudor, I take it.

Alice: They say Queen Elizabeth slept in it.

Mr. Blanquet: To be sure. I'm very partial to a bit of 'istory, being of French descent as I intimated. I belong to the Balham 'Istorical Society. I read a paper about the Diamond Jubilee. It wasn't very interesting, though.

Thomas: I was in the Yeomanry Diamond Jubilee time. We were reviewed up at Gloucester. A pretty fine spectacle.

Mr. Blanquet: Nothing like public service. I'm in the Boy Scouts. I mean I'm a scoutmaster. My daughter is a Girl Guide.

Thomas: Have you got a daughter?

Mr. Blanquet: Yes, a fine girl. Like her mother — nothing like me.

Thomas: How old is she?

Mr. Blanquet: Rising twenty.

Thomas: That's the same age.

Mr. Blanquet: The same age?

Alice: Our girl is twenty — Joan.

Thomas: Does she pay any attention to anything you say?

Alice: Thomas, you mustn't ——

Mr. Blanquet: Not at all, ma'am. I'm a great believer in social enquiry. Why, yes, I think I may say she pays a good deal of attention.

Thomas: Is anybody courting her?

Mr. Blanquet: I haven't asked her. I don't think I should look upon it as my place to.

Thomas: There you are. All alike. Of course she pays attention if you don't say things she wouldn't want to pay attention about. Suppose she goes off behind your back?

Mr. Blanquet: Goes off behind my back?

Thomas: Gets married.

Mr. Blanquet: Why shouldn't she?

Thomas: To the wrong man.

Mr. Blanquet: I don't think she would marry the wrong man. For her.

Thomas: Would you let her go ballet dancing?

Mr. Blanquet: Why certainly, if she wanted to. I once was a dancer myself. In a circus.

Alice: Were you in a circus?

Mr. Blanquet: For a fortnight. I didn't dance well enough. I got in because my great-grandfather was the famous Alphonse Blanquet who danced three nights before the great Napoleon. I'm afraid I only had aspirations. It doesn't matter.

Alice: I was born in a circus, and Mr. Greenleaf took

me away from it to marry me. I was there twenty-five years all but two years' schooling.

Mr. Blanquet: I sometimes think marriage is a sort of circus. Understanding, of course, that I like circuses.

Thomas: Did you have elephants?

Mr. Blanquet: No.

Thomas: The best circuses have elephants.

Alice: Would you like your supper now, Mr. Blanquet?

She brings her account books to the table and works at them.

Mr. Blanquet: A little later on, if it suits you. I 'ad an egg for tea.

Thomas: Would you like her to go out in a Rolls Royce motor-car?

Mr. Blanquet: I beg your pardon?

Thomas: With a fellow above her station.

Mr. Blanquet: It has never occurred to me that there was anyone above Annette's station.

Thomas: You're all wrong, Mr. Blanky. You don't mean to tell me there's no station above sardines.

Mr. Blanquet: Oh no, Annette doesn't sell sardines. She's secretary to Bill Bromyard. They think he'll be in the Cabinet when the Labour party comes in again. He might even be Prime Minister.

Thomas: Are you Labour?

Mr. Blanquet: No, but Annette is. I'm a Conservative. Safety first — same as our tins. Not but what we may be in the wrong boat yet.

Thomas: Weak-minded, that's what it is.

Mr. Blanquet: Meaning me?

Thomas: Well, you're her father.

Mr. Blanquet: That's all right then. Only I shouldn't like anyone to call my Annette weak-minded. She's got more sense than ten like you and me. I'd rather she went her own way than mine any day.

Alice: What part of England did your circus travel?

Mr. Blanquet: My fortnight they were in Suffolk. I resigned at Woodbridge. What was your turn, ma'am?

Alice: Bareback, tightrope, trapeze — I learnt it all.

Mr. Blanquet: A star. I wonder you could leave it.

Alice: Mr. Greenleaf was a masterful man.

Thomas: Well, I can't master my own daughter, it seems. And nobody thinks it matters.

Mr. Blanquet: But she's not in any trouble, is she?

Thomas: How do I know what she is? There's been trouble enough before now between here and Ciceter.

Alice: Of course there's no trouble. You heard what Mr. Blanquet said about his daughter. It's much wiser to be like that.

Thomas: Maybe I ought to resign out of my circus too. But mark me, you give life a loose rein and life'll run away with you. It's all loose rein nowadays, and you say let 'er rip. I don't, that's all. I call it damfool.

Another head appears at the window.

Cyril Beverley: Oh, good-evening. I booked a room. Mr. Cyril Beverley is the name.

Alice: Yes, sir. Will you go up?

Beverley: Thanks awfully. Is there a telephone in it?

Alice: No, sir; I'm afraid we don't have the telephone here.

Beverley: Oh, it doesn't matter in the least.

Thomas: There's one at the post-office. That's half a mile.

Beverley: How nice.

ALICE has rung a bell and now speaks through the window.

Alice: Show Mr. Beverley to Number 3.

BEVERLEY disappears.

Thomas: Telephone in his bedroom. What's he think it is — the Strand Palace 'Otel?

Alice: But we ought to have one in the house. I'm always telling you so.

Thomas: When I'm dead you can have a dozen. What's the use of 'em? Just to let you know a bit quicker what you don't want to know at all. Who is the young spark, anyway?

Alice: I don't know. His letter came from London. It had a sort of crest upon it.

Thomas: Something to do with Clifton Court, I suppose. Roberts said somebody was after it again.

Mr. Blanquet: Annette was a telephone operator until she got an intro to Bill Bromyard. Of course, she had educated herself, shorthand and typewriting and all that.

Thomas: Well, let's hope she hasn't made bad wuss.

Mr. Blanquet: I was very interested. I invented a way to prevent you from getting the wrong number. But it wasn't very natty. Didn't get taken up. Looks as though it's going to rain.

Alice: Yes, doesn't it?

Mr. Blanquet: Could I have 'alf a pint of bitter, please.

THOMAS goes into the bar.

Alice: You must be very proud of your Annette.

Mr. Blanquet: There's no credit due to me. But I am proud.

Alice: Joan is a good girl, too.

Mr. Blanquet: I'm sure she is, ma'am.

THOMAS returns with a glass of beer, which

MR. BLANQUET takes, paying the necessary pence.

Mr. Blanquet (drinking): Well, here's to our daughters. May they be as happy as they're good.

Thomas: Maybe you might wish 'em more than that and do 'em no harm.

Alice: Thomas.

Thomas: Well, one of 'em isn't any coronation prize for good behaviour just now, anyway. You watch 'em, Mr. Blanky. They need it.

Mr. Blanquet: I've never noticed it.

Thomas: No. The rabbit don't notice the trap till he's in it.

BEVERLEY appears at the door. He is twenty-three or so, rather faded, dynamic, naturally a friendly person, his charm for the most part effectively concealed under a carefully cultivated affectation of being very sure of himself and of nothing else.

Beverley: I beg your pardon — do I come in here? I can't find ——

Alice: Yes, please. I'm afraid we haven't much accommodation for visitors. We rarely have any. Two on one night is quite an event for us.

Thomas: Not much more than an old-fashioned ale-house, you might call it.

Mr. Blanquet: Though it is said that Queen Elizabeth once slept here.

Beverley: She seems so seldom to have slept at home. Such a bad example, don't you think?

Alice: Won't you please take a seat?

Beverley: Oh, thank you so much. That will be delightful. I adore old inns, don't you? How far exactly is Clifton Court from here?

Thomas: Two miles by road. One across the fields.

Beverley: Yes, that's what I was told. I think I won't go until the morning. I'm afraid it is going to rain, and I can't bear rain in the evening, can you? — because one always has to take a taxi.

Thomas: There's no taxis here.

Beverley: No, of course not. I mean in London. Unless the governor lets me have the car. But he's incredibly mean about that. It seems a long way from the station.

Thomas: Not much more than a mile.

Beverley: Indeed. I had to walk.

Alice: We didn't know how you were coming, or we would have met you.

Beverley: You know, I don't understand why the governor sent me down here at all. He won't take the slightest notice of my opinion.

Thomas: What might that be about, if I may ask?

Beverley: Oh, he wants to buy Clifton Court. He's Sir Wilkes Beverley — you know, Beverley's Yeast.

Mr. Blanquet: Very efficacious for 'earthburn, if I may say so. I always carry some with me.

Beverley: He's rather a rum old bird — suddenly got a pash for architecture. Of course, he doesn't understand a thing about it. But there it is — he's determined to spend half his pile on some derelict show of

this sort. Still, it's better than giving it to the Conservative party.

Thomas: You not being a Conservative, I daresay?

Beverley: Lord no — I belong to the Labour party. Though I really hate politics. I'm a novelist.

Alice: Have you written a book?

Beverley: Not exactly, not yet. I'm collecting material. It's to be called 'Mildew on Mayfair.' Of course, you can't treat politics seriously if you are interested in life. The politicians don't care about real things, do they? All statistics, and 'the people of this country will not tolerate' things that the people of this country don't care a hoot about either way, you know — vote-catching and all that. I ask you, could any private citizen ever tell from the way his life goes on whether the Conservatives or the Liberals or Labour was in power? No, sir, he could not. Politicians are all right for the jolly old newspapers and public dinners and hands across the sea, but you can't ask us to respect them.

Thomas: There's something in that, I won't deny. But that's no reason why a young gentleman like you shouldn't respect his father.

Beverley: Oh, you don't know the governor. He's a bit of a scream, really. 'Change and decay in all around I see.' Letters to *The Times*: 'Sir, — The student of manners must observe with regret that the young men and women of today treat the most sacred obligations with increasing levity. In 1874 . . . Paterfamilias — card enclosed.' I am the familias. Familias unsatisfactory.

Thomas: I shouldn't wonder.

Beverley: That's quite right of you, sir. We are the boys of the old brigade. Of course, the governor is decent enough in a way; he allows me five hundred a year, though he could just as easily make it a thousand. He was very keen on my joining him in Yeast, and was rather pipped about my declining. But I couldn't, you know. 'Take Beverley's Yeast and Eat What You Like.' Besides, I think the whole industrial system is rotten.

Thomas: You seem to do pretty well out of it, five hundred a year for doing nothing.

Beverley: That's where you're jolly well wrong. I earn every penny of it. The governor's hobby is taste, but he only took it up late in life. He wants guidance, I supply it. It's cheap at five hundred a year. Why, I save him thousands. He'd have bought the Denby Titian if I hadn't stopped him, and anyone can see a mile off it's a fake.

Mr. Blanquet: One of my favourite artists Titian. My daughter has what they call Titian hair.

Beverley: Has she though? Jolly fine colour.

Thomas: I thought you said he took no notice of your opinion.

Beverley: I said he would take no notice of it about Clifton Court, because he's going to get married again and the lady wants it. He's got the bit between his teeth this time. Of course, he doesn't realise that he hasn't any taste. I have to lead him without his knowing it. Mind you, I like the old boy, but he's obsolete. You know — God made them high or lowly and ordered their estate. You can't get away with that sort of thing any longer.

Thomas: He made me lowly, and I've been content sixty years and more.

Beverley: Oh no, sir. It's easy enough to see you're not really lowly. England's backbone. You've never been under anybody's thumb, sir.

Thomas: No, damme, sir, you're right. And if I may make bold to say so, if I was your father I'd see you was a bit more under mine.

Beverley: I'm afraid you are partially obsolete too.

Thomas: I've been told that already this evening. I'd have you know I've got a daughter.

Beverley: But how charming.

Thomas: It is not charming. It is vexation — same as you must be.

Beverley: Oh you mustn't think that. The governor and I hardly ever get on each other's nerves.

Thomas: Nerves! I've got no nerves. I honoured my father and my mother. I've got principles. All you've got is a Labour party, so as you can do as you darn well please.

Beverley: I'm afraid I don't quite follow that. But then I never could follow Conservative argument. That's why I joined Labour.

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ear, 'ear — though being a Conservative myself. What I say is, give me a party that don't depend on argument. We don't want brains, we want promises. It makes no odds whether they get kept or not, but we want 'em large and plentiful. That's what has made the Conservatives powerful. It isn't keeping a promise that inspires confidence, it's making it. Government in this country has been built up on promises, and tell me the country that has stood more

shocks. Your Labour party can't see that that's philosophy; it only thinks it's immoral.

Beverley: How delightful of you, but how wicked.

Mr. Blanquet: I told you so. But it's true. I've lived on promises all my life. I'm fifty-five, I've brought up three children; I like nice things, theatres and books and for to be'old the world so wide. And my income averages about two hundred and eighty pounds a year. I get a book now and again, I go to the gallery about once every six weeks, and I collect circulars from different steamship offices. Where would I have been without promises? And I've never been a tanner better off for any of 'em. Yet I feel satisfied — I might say I feel powerful in a manner of speaking. But if your people promise me things they want me to go out and fight for 'em, and like as not get into gaol if no worse. No thank you. Safety first for me, as I said to Mr. Greenleaf.

Thomas: Well, that's not the kind of Conservative I am.

Beverley: I'm sure it isn't. What is your kind, sir?

Thomas: Governing folks as isn't fit to govern themselves.

Beverley: Quite. But you know, if you hadn't believed that, there would never have been a Labour party. We're as wrong-headed as you are, and as stupid. Stupider very often. Because you see you are politicians trying to control people, and you've had generations of experience. While we are people trying to control politicians, and we have had none. But you either believe in peace at any price, say two hundred and eighty pounds a year, like this gentleman here, or

in the constable, like yourself, sir. We believe in ideas. That's much more difficult, much more dangerous, but it's organic. You are only organised. We grow; you only arrange yourselves.

Thomas: Very clever, I daresay. A sight too clever for sense.

Beverley: Oh, it's sensible enough. Really, you know. But I don't pretend it's my own. I got most of it from Bromyard.

Mr. Blanquet: Do you know Bill Bromyard?

Beverley: Rather. The best man in the party.

Mr. Blanquet: My daughter is his secretary.

Beverley: No — not Annette? Are you Mr. Blanquet?

Mr. Blanquet: That's me.

Beverley: By Jove, sir, she's a stunner. Titian — I should say so. And a first-rate mind, too. Bromyard says she'll be in Parliament herself yet.

Mr. Blanquet: Fancy you knowing 'er.

Beverley: Oh yes. She's been to the theatre with me several times.

Mr. Blanquet: I haven't 'eard 'er mention your name.

Thomas: What did I tell you? They want watching every minute.

Beverley: Watching? But there's nothing wrong about going to the theatre, is there?

Thomas: She's twenty, and she's got red hair, and she don't tell 'er father.

Beverley: She wouldn't say anything about going out with me; I'm afraid she wouldn't think it interesting enough. You know, sir, I don't think that is very nice of you.

Thomas: Nice — what's nice got to do with it? And if 'er father wouldn't find it interesting enough, he ought to.

Mr. Blanquet (with the smallest touch of uneasiness): Annette knows best.

Thomas: She's no right to know better than you do.

During this scene there has been the sound of drinks being served in the bar and an occasional glimpse of an elderly barmaid passing by the desk window.

Outside, the fine summer evening has been breaking up into bad weather, and rain is now falling heavily.

ALICE, who has detached herself from the conversation to work at her accounts, now closes her books, and moves with them towards the desk. As she does so a third head appears at the window.

The Newcomer: Good-evening. Can you let me have a room?

Alice: I'm afraid not, sir. We only have two for visitors, and they're both engaged.

The Newcomer: That's very awkward. I'm by myself in an open car, and I've got axle trouble.

Alice: Please come in, sir.

AMBROSE GODOLPHIN comes into the room. He is an ample, fresh-coloured, distinguished looking man of something under sixty. He is drenched, and takes off a light waterproof as he comes in. He hands it and his hat to THOMAS, who takes them out.

Godolphin: Thank you. They would make a mess in here. I was going on to Cirencester, but my car is hope-

less. I had to leave it half a mile down the road. Haven't you any room at all?

Alice: Nothing at all, sir.

THOMAS comes back.

Godolphin: Is there any other inn here?

Thomas: No, sir, not nearer than Durnford.

Godolphin: How far is that?

Thomas: Four miles.

Godolphin: Well, what am I to do? I can't walk. It's getting worse every minute, too. It won't clear up to-night.

Alice: There are two beds in this gentleman's room. I don't know whether he and you would mind — I'm afraid I can't suggest anything else.

Beverley: By all means, if it's agreeable to you, sir.

Godolphin: That's very good of you, I'm sure. It seems I've no choice but to accept your kind offer.

Alice: Have you any luggage, sir?

Godolphin: I brought my bag along. I'll just go up and put some slippers on.

ALICE rings the bell.

Alice: What name, sir?

Godolphin: Mr. Godolphin.

Alice (speaking through the window): Mr. Godolphin, Number 3. Can I get you anything, sir?

Godolphin: Oh, just anything you have. I think some bread and cheese.

He goes out.

Alice: What would you other gentlemen like?

Beverley: Bread and cheese is right for me. I had something at Oxford.

Mr. Blanquet: Is there any meat?

Alice: Cold lamb, and a steak and kidney pie.

Mr. Blanquet: I think I'll 'ave a bit of pie.

Beverley: 'Since taking Beverley's Yeast . . .' — no reflection on you, Mrs. Greenleaf.

ALICE smiles at him and goes out.

Beverley: Rather a genial old pippin he seemed.

Mr. Blanquet: A gentleman, anyone can see that.

Beverley: Vintage. More crust and cobwebs, I'll bet. How far is it to Cirencester? You call it Ciceter, don't you?

Thomas: Which you like. Nine miles.

ALICE comes back, and begins to lay the table.

Thomas: Time she was back.

Alice: They would wait to see if it stops.

Thomas: She ought to be back. She ought never to have gone. There's no good'll come of this night.

Alice: Don't fret, man.

Thomas: I've cause to. So have you, if you'd see it.

Mr. Blanquet: I hope your daughter isn't out in this, ma'am.

Thomas: She is. So far as we know where she is.

GODOLPHIN returns.

Godolphin: Very comfortable, I'm sure. Can I telephone to a garage and get them to send for my car?

Thomas: We haven't got the telephone.

Alice: You see, Thomas.

Thomas: We can send down to Martin's. On the Oxford road isn't it, sir?

Godolphin: Yes — about half a mile. They'll have to tow it.

Thomas: Very good.

He goes out.

Godolphin: Do I join you here?

Alice: If you please, sir. This is a very homely place.

Godolphin: Charming, charming.

ALICE goes out with her tray.

Godolphin (to BEVERLEY): I'm much obliged to you. I don't know what I should have done.

Beverley: Not at all. Universal brotherhood, you know. Helping when we meet them lame dogs over stiles.

Godolphin: Quite so. Very neatly put, I'm sure.

Beverley: Oh, you mustn't mind me. I never could go in for respecting my elders. After all, there's nothing remarkable in becoming an elder, is there?

Godolphin: Nothing. Except that one has learnt more and knows less.

Beverley: How awfully like the governor.

Godolphin: You flatter me.

Beverley: You flatter the governor.

THOMAS comes back, and a moment later is followed by ALICE with a full tray. She sets out the table — the pie, bread, cheese, salad, and so on.

Godolphin: I think a glass of sherry. Have you some good sherry?

Thomas: Some pretty good old brown, I believe.

Godolphin (doubtfully): Old brown — yes. Might I see a bottle?

Thomas: Certainly, sir.

He goes.

Alice: There you are, gentlemen."

Godolphin (inspecting the table as the others seat themselves): Splendid. A local cheese?

Alice: No nearer than Cheddar, sir.

THOMAS *returns with the bottle.*

Godolphin (*scrutinising it*): Yes. I think perhaps the bottle, if these gentlemen will do me the honour?

Mr. Blanquet: It's long since I tasted sherry. The last time was on a Margate steamer. That's twelve years ago.

ALICE *gets glasses while THOMAS draws the cork.*

Godolphin: A much undervalued drink in these days. Abused by all sorts of fancy treatment.

THOMAS *fills three glasses.*

Godolphin: Won't you join us?

Thomas: I stick to ale, thank you, sir.

Godolphin (*taking his place at table, to the company*): Your health, gentlemen.

They drink, and begin to eat. ALICE lights the lamp and draws the curtain.

Godolphin: An inspiration. But a barren one, I fear. You haven't by any chance got any sardines?

Alice: I'm sorry, we haven't, sir.

Mr. Blanquet (*producing a tin from his coat-tail pocket*): Will you allow me, sir.

Godolphin: But a magician. How remarkable of you.

Mr. Blanquet: I travel in them.

Godolphin: Travel in them?

Mr. Blanquet: You know, sell 'em. That's a sample tin. You'll find them very appetising. Fit for any table. You open it like this. That's our patent. Pretty good, what?

He hands the open box to GODOLPHIN.

Godolphin (*helping himself*): Thank you. Fill up your glass, Mr. — er, I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name.

Mr. Blanquet: Blanquet — spelt B-l-a-n-q-u-e-t. French descent.

Godolphin: Indeed.

They drink the sherry during the following scene.

Beverley: Mine's Beverley. Son of Beverley's Yeast. Now we all know each other.

Godolphin: Excellent sardines. Do you find them attractive to the public?

Mr. Blanquet: The brand is only just on the market. But I'm very 'opeful.

Godolphin (looking at the tin): I must recommend them.

Mr. Blanquet: That's my card, sir (*which he hands him*). Anything you could do in this district — but of course you couldn't. May I ask what your line of business is — or perhaps you 'aven't one?

Godolphin: Law. I'm at the Bar.

Beverley: Oh, are you Godolphin, K.C.?

Godolphin: Unusually put, but I am.

Beverley: I say, you know, that Garstin case was pretty rotten. You never ought to have won. Old Benbow's summing up was a disgrace.

Alice: You don't mind our being here, I hope. It's really our sitting-room you see.

She is working at one side of the main window, THOMAS reading a paper at the other.

Godolphin: Indeed no. I'm afraid, young man, I can't discuss these matters out of court.

Beverley: Oh, hell's bells, of course you can. The governor's cracked on K.C.s — a dozen of them come to our place. I wonder you haven't. They talk about their cases all the time. Honestly now, don't you think Betty Garstin ought to have got off?

Godolphin: The jury thought not.

Beverley: They were bluffed, you know that. It was her father's evidence that did it.

Godolphin: He volunteered to give it.

Beverley: Old swine, I call him. Turning against his own daughter like that. Just because she told him to mind his own jolly old business when he wanted to stop her marrying Leslie Garstin.

Godolphin: Wasn't he right in wanting to stop it? A notorious blackguard, who brought her to this.

Beverley: That doesn't excuse old man Sellers for doing what he did.

Thomas: The girl got no more than she asked for. Sir Paul Sellers earned the thanks of many a father in this land.

Mr. Blanquet: Still, it was a bit severe; you must allow it was a bit severe.

Thomas: I don't allow nothing of the sort. It was plain he had striven for 'er good. Striven these years. And she wouldn't have it.

Beverley: Nonsense, if I may say so. Old man Paul never understood Betty any more than my governor understands me. If I wanted to go off the rails my governor was the very thing to encourage me.

Thomas: Then depend on it, it was your own stubbornness that would have been at fault.

Beverley: Stubborn? Not my strong suit in our family. And I wager it wasn't Betty's if the truth were known.

Thomas: She got her deserts.

Godolphin: Between ourselves, I was sorry to win that case.

Thomas: Then I'm sorry to hear you say it, sir.

Godolphin: Have you such a thing as half a bottle of white wine? Chablis — or Graves?

Alice: Yes, sir, Graves.

Godolphin: Thank you.

Alice: Anything for you, gentlemen?

Beverley: A small Scotch and soda, please.

Mr. Blanquet: I think I'll 'ave another 'alf pint — if it will mix all right with the sherry.

ALICE goes out.

Mr. Blanquet: I always thought I should like to be a barrister myself. I once was counsel for the defence in a mock trial in the Balham Debating Society. The prisoner got ten years.

Godolphin (going to the window and looking out): What a night!

Thomas: You may well say so, sir. It is.

ALICE returns with the drinks, which she and

THOMAS serve.

Godolphin: Just one thing more — a piece of cake?

Alice: Yes, sir. *Again she goes.*

Thomas: My daughter is out in it.

Godolphin: But how unfortunate. Not far, I hope.

Mr. Blanquet: Perhaps I could go with an umbrella. I should be very willing.

Thomas: In a car — like that night Mrs. Garstin went with his lordship.

Godolphin: I'm sure it's nothing like that.

Thomas: We're not sure it's not like anything. She's gone with a man that is above her station — grades above it. I forbade her, and she went.

ALICE returns with the cake.

Alice: Thomas, you shouldn't go on like this in front of the gentleman.

Thomas: Why shouldn't I go on? She's my daughter, and there's something wrong I tell 'ee with more than the night. Why isn't she back? You're all agin me, and she's my gal.

Godolphin: They will just have taken shelter, that's all.

The company in the bar has been growing and mellowing. It is now in full swing. A gramophone is started. The tune is 'The Belle of New York.'

Mr. Blanquet: That's a good one. Old-fashioned, but it holds its own, don't it? Nothing like music, is there? I'm a musical critic.

Beverley (lighting a cigarette): Professional?

Mr. Blanquet: No, unpaid. I criticise gramophone records for the Balham Institute Journal. Of course, I get the records free, though most of the companies won't send them. Bad policy. Balham is a first-class place for music. Did you ever see Edna May in 'The Belle of New York,' Mr. Godolphin?

Godolphin: Indeed, yes. More than once. Charming.

He picks up the song from the gramophone as he lights a cigar.

'For she is the Belle of New York,
The subject of all the town talk,
She makes the whole Bowery
Fragrant and flowery
When she goes out for a walk.'

BLANQUET joins in, and other voices in the bar.

Mr. Blanquet: Now, ma'am, you sing, I'm sure. Here's to circuses (*drinking*). Just one more 'alf pint, I think, seeing it's a festive evening.

He fills and lights a pipe. ALICE goes to fetch the beer, singing with the rest.

'She's soft as a snowy white dove,
She's simply created to love,
The fellows all sigh for her,
They would all die for her,
She is the Belle of New York.'

ALICE brings BLANQUET'S drink.

Mr. Blanquet: I never 'ear a good tune without wishing I'd made a success of the dancing.

Alice: I know. It does bring it all back, doesn't it?

A popular waltz tune is put on.

Mr. Blanquet (a little loosened up by his drinks, as BEVERLEY and GODOLPHIN are also): Reely, I can't stand that. You'll 'ave to dance with me, ma'am.

Placing his pipe on the mantelpiece, he waltzes with ALICE round the room, while BEVERLEY and GODOLPHIN take up the tune, and the general activity in the bar increases.

THOMAS moves about with growing uneasiness to the bar door, then to the window and back to the door.

Thomas (suddenly): Why isn't she back? It's pretty near closing time.

Godolphin: I'm sure there's no cause for anxiety.

Thomas: By your leave, sir, there may be. And where there may be, there is. Leastways, I'm anxious. (*At ALICE*) I couldn't dance.

Alice (still waltzing): It's very obliging of Mr. Blanquet.

Mr. Blanquet: The pleasure is mine, ma'am.

Alice: The girl's all right, Thomas. Do quiet yourself.

Thomas: Then why isn't she back?

After another restless movement THOMAS goes through into the bar.

Beverley (to GODOLPHIN): How many daughters have you got, Godolphin?

Godolphin: Damn it, sir, none. I'm not married.

Beverley: What a pity. Mr. Blanquet has a daughter — she's a clinker. Red hair, and ankles — I suppose you wouldn't care to dance?

Godolphin: Not with you, if that's what you mean. But if Mrs. Greenleaf would give me the pleasure ——?

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ere, I say, possession is nine points of the law.

Godolphin: I am the law. Madam ——

He takes ALICE from BLANQUET, and proceeds to dance with her.

Mr. Blanquet (recovering his pipe): Very nice too — I 'aven't had a dance for a long time. You know, Mr. Beverley, you didn't ought by rights to talk about Annette's ankles like that.

Beverley: But why not? Every man admires a good ankle.

Mr. Blanquet: Of course, I must allow that.

Thomas (his voice ringing out in the bar): My God!

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ullo — what's up?

ALICE and GODOLPHIN stop dancing.

Alice (moving towards the door): What is it, Thomas?

Thomas (still in the bar): Stop that thing.

The gramophone stops. THOMAS appears at the door hastily putting on a great-coat.

Alice: What is it?

Thomas: What is it? Who knows what it is? Ben Topliss has just bicycled back from Ciceter. I asked him if he'd seen Arnwood's car.

Alice: Well — had he?

Thomas: He had. He saw it standing in the lane outside the Park End summer-house.

Alice: But, Thomas —

Thomas: What's the good of butting — what's that car doing there?

Alice: They must have gone in for shelter, as Mr. Godolphin said.

Thomas: Shelter? Two miles from 'ome? Well, they'll find it less shelter than they think. (*Buttoning his coat he strides out. As he passes through the bar his voice is heard.*) It's time, gentlemen, if you please.

After a moment's lull, there is a buzz of conversation in the bar as the company breaks up.

In a few moments there is silence.

Alice: Please, sir, what do you think it means?

Godolphin: Nothing to worry yourself about. Young people . . . after all . . .

Alice: Yes — but — Oh no, Joan isn't like that. What shall I do? (*Going to the window and looking out.*) It's pouring. My husband is very headstrong.

Beverley: Oh, things don't happen like that in these days.

Alice: He doesn't belong to these days.

Godolphin: There may be a scene, that's all. You can't help it. Would you like me to go down? Where is the summer-house?

Alice: No — it's best to leave them alone. (*A pause.*) Isn't it?

Godolphin: I don't really think that interference would help.

Alice: No.

Godolphin: Don't distress yourself. Perhaps we had better go to bed. Unless there is anything — ?

Alice: No thank you, sir. Here are your candles. Your room is Number 4, Mr. Blanquet.

She, GODOLPHIN and BLANQUET light three candles of a row standing on a shelf by the door.

Godolphin: Will the bath-water be hot?

Alice: Yes, sir.

Godolphin: Thank you. Good-night. And if there's anything we can do —

He goes out.

Beverley: She'll hold her own, don't you worry. Good-night.

He follows.

Mr. Blanquet: Good-night, ma'am.

As he goes, ALICE stands looking after them; then she goes to the window again and looks out, listening to the rain. She takes the lamp to the table, gets her account books, and sits down. As she does so, MR. BLANQUET appears at the door, candle in hand.

Mr. Blanquet: Are you sure you wouldn't like me to wait up with you, ma'am?

Alice: No thank you — it's very good of you.

He looks at her for a moment, and goes. She opens her ledger and takes up her pen. Then she turns to the window and is motionless as

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

Bedroom Number 3 at the 'Bird in Hand,' an hour later.

Two single beds, alongside each other, separated by three or four feet. On the outer side of each bed is a small table with a candle burning. There are three doors, one to each adjoining room and one to the landing.

In one bed, propped up by pillows, is BEVERLEY, in silk pyjamas, smoking a cigarette and reading a paper-covered novel. The other bed is empty. A scrapwork screen stands across one door.

After reading a page or so, BEVERLEY gets out of bed, goes to the window, pulls the curtains back, and pushes the window wide open. Outside it is now bright moonlight. He throws his cigarette out, goes back to the table, lights another, gets into bed again, and goes on reading.

A moment later GODOLPHIN comes in from the landing, wearing a dressing-gown and carrying his towel, tooth-brush, and sponge, which he puts on the wash-stand.

Beverley: Hope you don't mind my opening the window wider. It's a ripping night now.

Godolphin (closing it a little): Not at all.

Beverley: How nice of you. Smoke?

Godolphin: Not in bed, thank you.

He has taken his dressing-gown off, and now gets into bed.

Beverley: You know, what you were saying is all right, but these things are a matter of fashion just as much as togs. Of course, the old man could wear a smock if he liked, but he can't expect his daughter to go about with a sunbonnet and a milk-pail. He may be worried and all that, but going off in that way — as though the girl had broken out of Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies. It isn't the Stone Age.

Godolphin: Do you know much about the Stone Age?

Beverley: Jolly old cave-man and all that sort of thing.

Godolphin: Very illuminating. And in your experience the cave-man is defunct?

Beverley: Not quite defunct. But he can't get away with it any longer.

Godolphin: Get away with it?

Beverley: You're a bit antediluvian, aren't you? That's American — you know, the home of the bean and the cod, Spearmint, Sinclair Lewis. Do you know Lewis?

Godolphin: Only Sir George.

Beverley: No, 'Main Street.' Pretty good stuff for cobwebs that. It's a bit old-fashioned now though. You ought to like it.

Godolphin: Conclusively. An amateur of logic. Where were you educated? Or weren't you?

Beverley: If it comes to that, I don't suppose I was, much. Eton and King's. Wells of English undefiled.

Godolphin (as a cloud of smoke drifts over him): Do you ever smoke tobacco?

Beverley: Finest leaf from the plantations of Bristol.

Godolphin: Stinkers — also undefiled. Your generation has got no palate, that's what's the matter with you. Appetites and no palate.

Beverley: I didn't make my generation, you know.

Godolphin: Do you suggest that that's any excuse for it?

Beverley: I say, K.C., ring off. You aren't at the Old Bailey.

Godolphin: Ring off — certainly. Good-night.

He blows out his candle and turns over for sleep.

Beverley: Yes, but I say — I've got that old gaffer and his girl on my chest. You don't really think he was doing any good by going off on the rampage like that?

Godolphin: I have a clerk whose name is Marcus Aurelius Jones. His perfect state is haddock for tea on Fridays. Where do you place him in the balance-sheet of the universe?

Beverley: I don't get you.

Godolphin: I should like you in the box at the Old Bailey of which you speak so confidently. I was merely suggesting that to some of us life is a spectacle, to others an argument. For me, Greenleaf and his daughter are evidence; for you, they are endorsements, as your American friends would say. And yet you think I am an old fogey. Good-night.

Beverley: Granted — you didn't get your K.C. for nothing. But man to man — isn't a father like that just the thing to make any girl step on the gas?

Godolphin: Have you ever been to Ames, Iowa?

Beverley: Not yet.

Godolphin: I have. So don't come stepping on the gas over me. And if you must know, I was there before Sinclair Lewis was born. Officially, good-night.

He buries himself in his bedclothes, comfortably, placing his right hand under his pillow. BEVERLEY half renews the argument, but decides to return to his novel. Still smoking, he reads half a page or so, and then resumes —

Beverley: I'm sorry to disturb you, but do you realise that we are on the fringe of as much spectacle as you can want? Old Jephtha, Judge of Israel — you know, daughter whom he loved passing well — may return at any moment, daughter and all with the devil to pay.

Godolphin, in reply, gets out of bed and, fetching the screen, places it between the beds, and returns to his slumbers.

Beverley: The bally bird. Lumps of sugar from the gallery.

He reads again for a moment or two. Then standing up in bed and speaking over the screen —

Beverley: Look here, *Godolphin*, this thing is on my nerves, and I don't mind telling you. I've a hunch that the girl is a decent girl, and that old man governor, just like my governor, is going all wrong about her. Damn it, *Godolphin*, K.C., wake up. This isn't a country pub — it's the Merchant of Venice, with Shylock coming down the lane. Lear and Cordelia — any darned old thing you please, but we can't jolly well just go to sleep like this.

Godolphin (half asleep): Gentlemen of the Jury — I mean, shut up — go to bed.

Beverley: I am in bed, but damn it all —

There is a knock on the door from BLANQUET'S bedroom.

Beverley: Hullo?

The door opens, and BLANQUET appears, wearing a flannel nightgown and bedsocks, with a candle in his hand.

Mr. Blanquet: Would you gentlemen mind not talking quite so loud? I'm not a 'eavy sleeper, and I'm feeling a bit queer. I think I must 'ave 'ad too much of Mr. Godolphin's sherry.

Godolphin: If you can induce Mr. Beverley to stop talking at all, I shall be extremely obliged to you. I can't.

Beverley (sitting down in bed): Sorry if we disturbed you. A thick head is beastly, isn't it? But how you and the K.C. can want to go to sleep when the balloon may go up at any minute beats me.

Godolphin (standing up now on his bed and speaking over the screen): Must you thundering well go on talking all night? Didn't you hear Mr. Blanquet say he wasn't very well? And if you go on smoking cigarettes in bed you'll set yourself on fire and me too.

Mr. Blanquet: I 'aven't 'eard anyone come in, 'ave you?

Beverley: There you are, you see; a very natural interest. No, not yet.

Mr. Blanquet: I'm thinking of that poor Mrs. Greenleaf sitting down there all alone and waiting.

Godolphin (going to the window and closing it a little more, a proceeding that BEVERLEY scrutinises round the screen): But, my dear sir, we can't do anything about it. If Mr. Beverley is so excited that he can't wait till

the morning, why doesn't he go downstairs and see what does happen. He won't hear anything up here. And in any case, I really must be allowed to go to sleep.

Mr. Blanquet: That's right — we shan't 'ear anything up here — it's no good 'anging about. And we reely did ought to go to sleep. If you'll be so kind, Mr. Beverley, let us just say no more about it tonight, and we shall know what 'appens soon enough. Good-night, and forgive me for speaking about it. I 'ate complaining.

Beverley: Not at all. Happy dreams.

BLANQUET turns to go back to his own room. As he does so the outer door of the other adjoining room is slammed. They all listen for a moment in silence.

Beverley: Whose room is that?

Godolphin: How do I know?

Beverley: Unless I am mistaken, the balloon is going up.

A loud knocking is heard on the door that has just been slammed.

Joan's voice (from the next room): Go away. I don't want to talk to you any more.

Thomas (from the landing beyond): I daresay you don't. But I 'aven't finished talking by a long shot. Open the door.

Alice (on the landing with him): Stop it, Thomas. There's no sense in behaving like this whatever has happened.

Thomas: Open the door I say, or I'll put my foot through it.

GODOLPHIN gets out of bed and puts on his dressing-gown.

Thomas: I mean it. If you think I'm going to bed leaving things like this, you're mistaken. Are you going to open it?

Joan: I've nothing to say.

Thomas: But I 'ave — a 'ell of a lot. If you think giving me the slip down the road like that is any argument, you'll find it isn't.

Alice: Come away, *Thomas*.

Thomas: Not till we've 'ad this out. For the last time, are you going to open this door?

There is silence for a moment.

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ere, didn't I ought to do something? I was a special constable once. 'E's not in 'is proper senses.

Then follows the first resounding kick. GODOLPHIN moves hurriedly to the communicating door, but finding it locked turns back towards the landing. At the same moment ALICE, knocking but not waiting for an answer, throws open the landing door and comes in.

Alice: Excuse me, sir, but please come. He's lost his head. I can't do anything with him.

The kicking continues as GODOLPHIN hurries out, followed by ALICE.

Beverley: It's a genuine balloon all right.

Mr. Blanquet (tapping on the partition door): Won't you come in 'ere, miss? It might be safer.

Godolphin (on the landing): Really, sir, you can't do this sort of thing.

Thomas: Who says I can't? Leave me alone.

Another kick.

Mr. Blanquet (running to the landing door): Ma'am, come and ask 'er to come in 'ere.

Alice: Yes, thank you. (*Coming in.*) Oh dear, oh dear. (*She crosses to the other door.*) Joan, unlock the door. Come in here.

Joan: All right.

The door is unlocked and opened, and Joan stands in the doorway, candle in hand, looking back into her own room. The kicking goes on.

Godolphin (still outside): Pull yourself together, Mr. Greenleaf. Stop it I tell you.

Thomas: What 'ave I got to pull myself together for? She's defied me, and now she's disgraced my name. Leave me alone I say.

Alice: You'd better open the door, Joan.

Joan: I won't. If he wants to behave like a tank, let him.

Alice: Then I will.

Mr. Blanquet: No, let me do it, ma'am.

He moves to go through, but as he does so a panel breaks in and the far door is opened. ALICE draws JOAN into the room, and a moment later THOMAS appears, brushing BLANQUET aside. GODOLPHIN is behind him. BEVERLEY jumps out of bed and faces THOMAS in the doorway.

Thomas: What's all this about? I want to talk to my daughter, not to the 'ouse of Commons.

Beverley: Yes. Won't you come in?

Thomas: When I want your leave I'll ask for it.

Beverley: Certainly. It's only my bedroom.

Mr. Blanquet: And you didn't ought to push me about like that. Not that I matter, of course.

Thomas: This is a matter between me and my daughter. It isn't going to be settled at a public meeting. (*To Joan*) Are you coming out?

Joan: I don't want to talk to you. There's nothing to say.

Thomas: Nothing to say! I find my daughter shut up at night miles away from anyone with a man as is no good to 'er, and I'm told there's nothing to say. 'Ave I got to make you come out of this room?

He makes a move forward. GODOLPHIN and BEVERLEY quite gently hold him back.

Godolphin: You really must not go on behaving like this. Violence won't help anybody.

Thomas (shaking him off): Can't you leave me alone? What 'ave you got to interfere for anyway?

Godolphin: Couldn't I — or — er — some of us — perhaps act as — er, mediator? Are you sure of all your facts?

Thomas: I don't want no mediator. What do you mean by facts? Do you think I'm blind, or daft?

Beverley: Only temporarily, we are sure. Wouldn't it be better to leave it all until the morning?

Thomas: It would not. And, thanking you all, I can manage my own affairs.

Beverley: You know there seems to be some serious doubt about that. Kicking doors down does so derange the judgment. If you would consider it, Mr. Godolphin's proposal is a very sensible one. If you must do it tonight, wouldn't it be far better to discuss matters in the open, as it were? Far less explosive than secret sessions I'm sure. Mr. Godolphin alone if you prefer it — or you would find us all very sym-

pathetic. Just as you like. You see, we are hardly interfering. As I pointed out, it is my bedroom.

Thomas: I didn't ask my daughter to come in here.

Beverley: You made it rather inconvenient for her to stay in her own. Do take good advice. Let us discuss it. If Miss Greenleaf has no objection?

Joan: There is nothing to discuss. Tomorrow, I shan't be here to discuss it. I wouldn't have come back tonight if there had been anywhere else to go.

Thomas: What's that?

Joan: Why should I? You don't want me. How can you want me if you feel all that about me? And what's the use of my staying where anybody does feel it?

Thomas: That's just 'eadstrong talk.

Godolphin: Quite. You see how undesirable it is. Difficulties cannot be dealt with like this.

Thomas (to JOAN): Nothing has been said about your 'aving to go away.

Joan: It has — I've just said it.

Thomas (after an appreciable pause; still a little more sobered): If anyone can 'elp me out of this, I'm not above being 'elped. I can't say fairer than that. But I won't stand for no bluffing.

Godolphin: Capital. Do take a seat.

He offers him a chair; Thomas takes it mechanically.

Joan: What's the use of —

Godolphin: My dear young lady, since your father has gone so far, it is up to you now, isn't it?

Thomas: I offered to discuss it alone.

Joan: You did.

Alice: Your father is upset about this — terribly.

Whether rightly or not, you are the cause. We have got to see what can be done, and you must help.

Joan: All right. But I've nothing to say.

Godolphin: I think Miss Greenleaf is a good deal to be trusted. I'm sure she won't disappoint us. (*To THOMAS, offering his case*) Will you smoke a cigar?

Thomas: Not for me.

Godolphin: If nobody objects.

He lights one.

*ALICE takes a chair, and GODOLPHIN another.
JOAN remains standing.*

BLANQUET, still holding his candle, in the momentary lull suddenly becomes conscious of his attire.

Mr. Blanquet: Reely — you must excuse me, ladies — in the excitement I 'adn't noticed ——

He hurriedly takes the dressing-gown which is lying over the end of BEVERLEY'S bed, and puts it on.

Beverley: To be sure. If you don't mind, I'm afraid that's mine.

Mr. Blanquet: That's very awkward, isn't it? I daresay I shan't be wanted though. (*Moving towards his own door.*) Perhaps you'll be so good as to come and fetch it, Mr. Beverley?

Alice: Please don't go, Mr. Blanquet. I should like you to stop.

Mr. Blanquet: Certainly, ma'am. Just 'alf a minute.

He goes into his room, and returns at once wearing his black morning-coat over his night-shirt. He gives the dressing-gown back to BEVER-

LEY, *who puts it on.* BEVERLEY *sits on one bed,*
BLANQUET *on the other. There is a short silence.*

Alice: Joan, what has happened?

Joan: Very well, then; if I've got to talk, I'll talk once and for all. Gerry has been in love with me these six months. I'm not sure whether I am in love with him or not.

Godolphin: Gerry being ——?

Thomas: Sir Robert Arnwood's son from Bell Croft.

Godolphin: Quite so. Yes?

Joan: He has asked me several times to go down to the Summer-House with him. There was no reason why I shouldn't, but — well I just didn't.

Beverley: I don't mind saying I'm all for Gerry about that.

Joan: This evening when we went out he asked me again. He had nothing really to do in Ciceter. It was the fuss that father made before I went out that decided me. Why shouldn't I go? It was a lovely evening, and he wanted awfully much to go and sit quietly in there. I like him, and I had no reason for not trusting him. Anyway, I did trust him. We went in. Then it came on to rain, and we just waited on for it to stop. Then without any warning the door burst open, and there was father standing like the Day of Judgment let loose on the seven deadly sins. I don't propose to tell you what he said to Gerry — you've seen enough to guess the kind of thing it was. Gerry behaved rather well about it. I was ordered to come home at once, not very gently. Gerry wanted me not to; he said it wasn't safe. It very nearly came to more than words. I saw that to prevent that, if for no other reason, I must go.

I told Gerry he must leave me to look after myself. On the way home I could stand it no longer, and I ran. Father must have run too. I only got here a few minutes before him. Mother let me in, and I was beginning to tell her, when he came. You know the rest.

Thomas: 'Ave you finished?

Joan: Yes.

Thomas: I've never had but one child — that's 'er. I'm a yeoman, come out of yeoman stock back as far as far. I've seen a deal of change in my time, the coming of a new world as you might say. When I was a boy my father's gig was the fastest traffic on the Oxford turnpike. When Windridge's saw-mill first started to work with a gas-engine, the London newspapers sent down to write about it. I remember farm wages hereabouts being raised from seven to eight shillings a week, and I remember my uncle saying in this bar that the country was ruined because the income tax had gone to fourpence in the pound. If my father could stand at Carfax crossing today he'd think he was in Bedlam, and when I went to London last spring, I thought I was. It's all altered — altered they say more than was ever known in the same time. Well, I've never been able to see that the world was any the better for it, or anybody in it any the 'appier. What's more, I've never seen that folks was any different for all the change. I've not been much of a one for changing with the times myself, and I've never tried or wanted to understand half the things that go on. But some things I've seemed to understand, and about them I've never seen any occasion for altering my opinions. There's classes today same as there always

was, and same as to my way of thinking there always will be. Sometimes they get on together, sometimes they don't, that's all. I've always 'ad as much self-respect as the quality, but I've never wanted to be the quality. I grew up believing that young people had something to learn from their elders, and if today they think that they've nothing to learn from anybody, I don't know as there's anything to show that they're right and I'm wrong. I've always thought that to forget your place in love-making looks romantic and pretty enough in story-books, and means nothing but trouble and confusion anywhere else. I still think so, and I don't believe that for all their free and easy notions about it folk are any freer or any easier. That's my audit-book of life, and I've got my girl to hand it on to, and no one else. And she throws it back in my face. You may think I've took an odd way of showing it tonight, but I've cherished that girl in my 'eart; I've wanted 'er to grow up seeing things straight and simple like I've tried to do. I've looked for 'er to be a better showing of my own sort, firm out of the flesh and sense my forbears gave me, and not to have her 'ead turned by any high-flown theory that comes along about things that don't want theories anyway. I've believed in 'er, and she's let me down. She's got 'erself into this mess, and telling me that it's no mess can't change my beliefs of a lifetime. I'm sorry about what I've done tonight. I shall be sorry for it till the end of my life. I've behaved so as I ought to be ashamed, I know. But this business 'as pretty near broke my 'eart.

Mr. Blanquet: Dear me. Dear, dear me.

Joan: What's the use of calling it a mess when I tell you it isn't?

Beverley: That's how I look at it, I must say.

Godolphin: A limited view. Mr. Greenleaf, I proposed this — er, conference in the hope that it might ease a difficult situation. I confess I scarcely realised that you felt it as deeply as that. Frankly, I thought that you had just lost your temper somewhat unreasonably. Your logic modifies my opinion. I feel now that my — that our intervention is perhaps indelicate. I withdraw from the case.

Thomas: Dammit no, you can't do that. I've spoken my say, as I've never done before. I did it because you wanted me to, because you said you might help me. Now show me the way out of my trouble. That's fair asking.

Beverley (to THOMAS): Don't you think, sir, that you ought to have heard what — Gerry had to say?

Thomas: Who wants to know what he 'ad to say?

Joan: He hasn't anything to say. What is there he could say? I can tell you anything you want to know about Gerry. I'm sorry, father, you've taken it this way. I'm sorry, if you like, that I've done anything to hurt you. But that doesn't make things different. What Gerry feels about me isn't the point. You disapprove of what I've done, without really knowing what it is. If I thought I had done wrong, I might ask you to forgive me. But I don't. I'm told, whatever I've done, that I am wrong, generally. So long as that's the view, we're never likely to agree about it. So the only thing for me is to go away. And now, if you don't mind, I'll go to bed.

She moves towards her own room.

Thomas (holding her by the arm): 'Ere — what's the good of talking like that? Where can you go to?

Joan: There are plenty of ways of living.

Mr. Blanquet: It isn't so easy picking up a job as you might think, miss. I shouldn't be 'asty, I shouldn't reely.

Godolphin: Come, come, this won't do. Miss Greenleaf, in my profession we learn to look for the points on both sides in every case. Our pretence that there is only one side can be made plausible only by an exact knowledge of the other. I think your father has been headstrong and rather inconsiderate.

Thomas: That's not for you to say; you were going to help me.

Godolphin: I think he has not tried very hard, seeing that you differ from him, to understand why you do so. Perhaps age is partly responsible. You are very young. Your father, I take it, might almost be your grandfather —

Thomas: What's that got to do with it?

Godolphin: Oh, a very young grandfather, Mr. Greenleaf, very vigorous — don't mistake me — but still, I merely observe that perhaps it adds to the difficulty. As I say, Miss Greenleaf, in my opinion you have some reason for feeling as you do. But also I am sure, in view of what your father has said, that you must realise how deeply he feels as he does. A little violent, as he has himself allowed, but you, my dear, must allow also that it was at worst the violence of affection. If you go away, you will find, as Mr. Blanquet points out, that it can be a very hostile world,

even to youth and charm and ability. Now can't we between us see some better way out of it than that?

Alice: Joan, what Mr. Gerald thinks does matter very much. And you have already told us about that. You say he is in love with you. But you say you don't know whether you are in love with him. Everything really depends on that.

Thomas: I tell you if you're trying to make Mr. Gerald Arnwood my son-in-law, I won't stand for it.

Beverley: But is there anything undesirable about him, sir?

Thomas: Is my daughter my class or not? Very well, then, he's above it.

Beverley: But suppose he doesn't think so?

Thomas: Then he's a numskull into the bargain.

Joan: Gerry is nothing of the sort. He's got as much brain as is good for any man — quite enough for me. And I don't propose to discuss my love affairs in public any longer.

Godolphin: Your love affairs?

Joan: Well, I don't care what you call it. I'm tired of being badgered, anyway.

Godolphin: My dear young lady, you can't fairly accuse me of that.

Beverley: He's not a bad kind of an old K.C., really.

Joan: I don't know what he is. No — I beg your pardon — you do seem rather nice.

Beverley: He also is old enough to be your grandfather.

Godolphin: I am not. Not decorously.

Joan: Well, good-night.

Godolphin: One moment please, Miss Greenleaf.

Suppose this young gentleman to be sincerely attached to your daughter, Mr. Greenleaf, and suppose him to be so fortunate as to win her affection, might you not persuade yourself to accept the situation?

Thomas: I should feel as I'd misconducted myself in face of the parish where my name has been a good one for three hundred years.

Mr. Blanquet: Oh no, don't say that. Not misconducted yourself. Why, Annette 'ad a Marquis making up to 'er. If she'd taken up with 'im, I can't say as I should 'ave felt any misconduct on my part. But she didn't think anything of 'im — no.

Beverley: Didn't she? Splendid.

Joan: Who is Annette?

Mr. Blanquet: My daughter, miss.

Beverley: She's awfully pretty. She's got ripping red hair too. I should like to see my governor — but there, it's all right, Mr. Blanquet, I haven't got an earthly. I'd marry Annette tomorrow though, if she would have me.

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ave you asked her?

Beverley: Oh, often.

Mr. Blanquet: She hasn't mentioned it.

Beverley: I told you — she wouldn't think it worth while. Very natural. Miss Greenleaf, there's just one thing, if you'll allow me to mention it. By the way, my name's Beverley. We're taking Clifton Court, you know. Perhaps this is awful cheek of me, but if I was keen on a girl and there was a rumpus, I can't see myself being out of it.

Joan: Are you suggesting that Gerry ought to be here now, in the middle of the night?

Beverley: Well, I was only thinking ——

Joan: Don't be absurd. How could he? Besides, I forbade him to follow us. And if you think Gerry is frightened or anything like that, you're jolly well mistaken.

Through the open window comes GERALD'S voice from below.

Gerald: I say, Joan. Mrs. Greenleaf. Hi, up there. Joan.

Joan (running to the window): Gerry, go away. I told you to let me look after myself.

Gerald: Yes, but I say, look here, you know ——

Thomas (moving towards the window): Blaze 'is impudence, I'll ——

Godolphin (intercepting him): Allow me. You are not in a proper mood ——

Thomas: I'll mood him ——

Godolphin: I beg you. Yes. (*He goes to the window.*) Are you there? Where are you? Oh yes, I see. Mr. Arnwood, I believe. My name is Godolphin — a friend of Mr. Greenleaf's. Will you be so kind as to go home to bed.

Gerald: I want to speak to Mr. Greenleaf. Where is he?

Thomas (at the window): I'm here. And I'll come downstairs and speak more than you bargain for.

He moves towards the door.

Godolphin: Mr. Greenleaf, if you want me to help you, I must insist on your giving me your solemn pledge for one thing.

Thomas: What's that?

Godolphin: Will you give it?

Thomas: 'Ow do I know?

Godolphin: On my honour it is for your good.

Thomas: Oh, very well. What is it?

Godolphin: To go to bed at once, and say not another word to anyone tonight.

Thomas: I —

He stops, looks at them all, glances again towards the window, makes a gesture of assent, and goes out quietly.

Gerald: I say, you know, I must speak to Mr. Greenleaf. Is he coming down?

Joan: Please, Gerry, do as you are told.

Godolphin: Mr. Arnwood, surely this young lady has every claim upon your consideration.

Gerald: Yes, but —

Godolphin: Mr. Greenleaf has gone to bed. We all propose to follow his example. Any explanations must wait until tomorrow.

Gerald: Yes, but what has been going on?

Joan: You heard what Mr. Godolphin said, Gerry; tomorrow. Don't worry. Good-night. Good-night, mother. (*She kisses her.*) Good-night all. Thank you for what you've tried to do. (*To BEVERLEY*) You see, he had the pluck all right.

She goes into her room, and turns the key of the communicating door.

Godolphin: Now, madam, try not to be anxious. The morning may help us.

Beverley (*speaking in a low voice from the window, and unseen by the others*): Wait a minute.

Alice: I'm sure it's very good of you, sir, to take all this trouble. I don't see why they shouldn't get married if they want to, do you?

Godolphin: I have every confidence in your daughter's judgment.

Mr. Blanquet: Your husband would get over it all right, ma'am. There's not much as we can't stand if we're put to it. I should say he's 'ad very few real 'ardships. It makes 'im wilful. I can say that for myself — there's nothing wilful about me.

Alice: I'm going to back them up right through if they want to go on with it.

Mr. Blanquet: You wasn't in a circus for nothing, ma'am.

Alice: Good-night.

She goes.

Mr. Blanquet: Good-night. Not that I shall sleep a wink after all this. That's what's the matter with that old man — he's 'ad too much luck. Some 'as it all. Some don't get any. I've got a brother-in-law who's the unluckiest man you ever knew. 'E got run over by an ambulance. 'E got over that, but now 'e 'as to live in Wolverhampton. Good-night.

He goes into his room and shuts the door.

Godolphin (throwing his cigar out of the window): Very irregular of me to smoke that in the middle of the night. (*He takes his tooth-brush and paste.*) I shan't be a moment.

He goes along the passage towards the bathroom.

Beverley (speaking from the window): I say, can you get up here? Quietly. Look, along that ledge there. Careful. That's it. Now.

He reaches out for GERALD'S hand, and hauls him in through the window.

Gerald: Hullo —

Beverley: Ssh! Must be quiet. My name's Beverley — you won't know me — taking Clifton Court. I've seen all through this shimozzle tonight. I'm on your side. Thought I'd like to tell you about it, so that you'd be warned. Jolly sporting of you to turn up.

Gerald (in the same low voice): What do you take me for? Where's Miss Greenleaf — where's the old man? What has happened?

Beverley: Ssh! (*Pointing to JOAN'S door.*) She's in there. He's gone off to his room.

Gerald (moving across to JOAN'S door, and standing in front of it): By Jove, isn't that wonderful. (*Going back to BEVERLEY.*) Has there been an awful row?

Beverley: A pretty good specimen.

Gerald: What happened?

Beverley: It finished up in here. Miss Greenleaf came in because he was breaking down her other door.

Gerald: But he didn't ——?

Beverley: No, of course not. And we got him calmed down. It was chiefly Mr. Godolphin's doing — we are sharing this room.

GODOLPHIN returns.

Godolphin: What the devil ——?

Beverley: Ssh, K.C. . . . Mr. Arnwood, Mr. Godolphin. I called him in because I knew he'd only be damned miserable if he had to go away like that.

Godolphin: But ——

Beverley: No, be reasonable, K.C. You've been in love yourself. I wanted him to know what has happened, that's all.

Gerald: Please go on.

Beverley: The old man has got class on his mind, badly. But the girl is all right.

Gerald: How do you mean?

Beverley: She's for you.

Gerald: Do you really think so? Really? My God, if I could only be sure of that.

Beverley: She stood up for you like anything. Didn't she, K.C.?

Godolphin: She displayed a — er — certain amount of solicitude. How did you get in here?

Gerald: Through the window.

Godolphin: Do you know this is my bedroom?

Beverley: No, mine, K.C.

BLANQUET appears at his door.

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ere, I say, what's going on now?

Beverley: Ssh! Quietly, Mr. Blanquet, very quietly.

Mr. Blanquet: Aren't you ever going to bed? Who's this?

Beverley: Mr. Gerald Arnwood, Mr. Blanquet. I called him in to reassure him. Mr. Blanquet is on your side too.

Mr. Blanquet: I don't want to be on anybody's side no more tonight. My 'eadache's getting worse all the time. I shan't be fit for anything tomorrow, and I've got ten customers to call on. 'Ow did you get in 'ere?

Gerald: Through the window.

Mr. Blanquet: You'll go and 'urt yourself, doing things like that.

Gerald (to GODOLPHIN): You see, sir, I had to come along to see if I could do anything. I found the place shut up. I knocked, and no one answered. Then I

found a light in this window, and heard voices — Joan's, and others. Of course, I shouted out.

Godolphin: You should have done as I told you and waited till the morning.

Gerald: I was going to. But when Mr. Beverley spoke to me I jumped at the chance of finding out what I could.

Mr. Blanquet: Are you very much in love?

Gerald: For months and months.

Mr. Blanquet: Yes, it does play you up, don't it?

Gerald: I've simply got to get it settled. I want to have it out with Mr. Greenleaf.

Godolphin: Well you can't till tomorrow.

Gerald: How is it between them now?

Beverley: Miss Greenleaf threatens to run away.

Gerald: Splendid.

Godolphin: It isn't splendid at all.

Mr. Blanquet: It's very dangerous for young ladies to run away.

Gerald: But I'd look after her.

Godolphin: How do you know she would let you?

Gerald: She would have to, then.

Mr. Blanquet: But you don't want her to 'ave you just because she can't 'elp it, do you?

Gerald: Of course I don't. What am I to do? Can't I speak to her?

Godolphin: Certainly not —

There is a knock from JOAN'S door. They listen.

Joan: What are you talking about in there? Who is it? Can I come in?

Godolphin: We beg your pardon for keeping you awake ——

Joan: May I come in?

Godolphin: Why — that is ——

Joan: Of course I can.

She opens the door and comes in, wearing a dressing-gown.

Joan: I knew it was Gerry. How did you get here?

Gerald: I'm frightfully sorry ——

Beverley: It was my fault, Miss Greenleaf. I couldn't let him go away like that. Of course, you couldn't ask him in, so I did. He came through the window.

Gerald: I was mad with anxiety. Joan, don't be angry with me. It's only because I care so much. If only you could care about me one-tenth part ——

Joan: I'll try. Gerry — you darling.

She holds her face up to be kissed, and he takes her in his arms in an ecstasy of surprised delight.

Joan: And now everybody knows. Mr. Godolphin, tomorrow father has got to be made to see reason. Good-night.

She goes into her room again, locking the door.

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ow are you going to get out?

Beverley: I'll come down with you and let you ——

Godolphin: Certainly not. It will wake everybody ——

Mr. Blanquet: It seems to me everybody is awake ——

Godolphin: Mr. Greenleaf, and then where shall we be? — I mean where will you be? You will go as you came.

Beverley: You're on their side too now, K.C.?

Godolphin: I am inclined to give it my favourable consideration.

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ere, we're not going to 'ave another conference now, are we?

Godolphin: We are not. I suggest that you should come round rather early in the morning. I propose to have a consultation with Mr. Greenleaf before breakfast. Good-night.

Gerald: Good-night, sir. I'm awfully much obliged to you — to all of you. (*Very quietly he goes across to JOAN'S door again, and stands in front of it.*) I didn't know that anything could ever be so wonderful as this.

He puts his hands behind him, closes his eyes, leans forward, and puts his lips against the door. Then he goes over to the window. They help him as he climbs out.

Mr. Blanquet (as he watches them): My brother-in-law once fell out of a window. It wasn't as 'igh as this one though. Fell on to a bees' 'ive 'e did. That's it though — 'e's all right.

Godolphin (partly closing the window): A nice lad.

Beverley: Lucky too. The girl's a dear.

Godolphin: Her father has got to be made happy about this too though.

Beverley: He is rather a game old buffer.

Godolphin: Thoroughbred. (*He gets into bed.*) Good-night.

Beverley (doing the same): Good-night.

Mr. Blanquet: Good-night 'as been said so often tonight it 'as become a mockery. (*He blows BEVER-*

LEY's candle out.) I shall 'ave a bilious attack to-morrow. I'm glad they're 'appy though.

He goes into his own room, closing the door after him, and

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

The bar parlour again. The next morning before breakfast, which is laid on the table. The sun streams in through the window, which is bright with a flower-box.

THOMAS is seated by the window. GODOLPHIN, standing with his back to the empty fire-grate, has apparently come to a period in an argument. He takes a turn across the room, and returns to his place.

Godolphin: To sum up, then, the case as I see it, from all points of view, is this. I respect your principles, Mr. Greenleaf. I think that, as such, they are sound. But like all principles, they may be dangerous, even misguided, in application — as, for example, in attempting to impose them on other people who have principles also. Your daughter, Mr. Greenleaf, is, unless I am much mistaken, a young lady with decided and, I conceive, wholesome principles of her own. Her conduct last night was, perhaps, a little rash, but I do not for a moment believe it to have been anything more than rash. In fact, from my knowledge of the circumstances, I am assured that it was not. Those two young people are very much in love with each other, and their principles will allow nothing to interfere with that. In this I think they are right. Now, if you oppose your principles to theirs, what will be the result? You will not affect their conduct, you will lose two very charming children, and you will probably

become an embittered old man. That would be a pity, Mr. Greenleaf, a great pity, because gentlemen should not become that. But if, having stated your views firmly as you have, you recognise that they are entitled to hold theirs, and that your submission greatly concerns their future happiness, you will, I venture to assert, lay up the best of all treasures for your old age.

Thomas: You'd argue a pig out of clover, if anybody could. But it's no use, Mr. Godolphin. 'Ow long have you been at it? — pretty near two hours. Well, there may be sense in what you say, but I can't bring myself to it.

Godolphin: Not all at once, to be sure.

Thomas: What do you mean — not all at once? Don't I tell you my mind's made up?

Godolphin: I shall permit myself to hope a little yet.

Thomas: That's your concern. And 'ow do we know he wants to marry 'er anyway?

Godolphin: I have — er — particular reason to suppose that he does.

Thomas: Me going up to take my vittles at Bell Croft — me sitting down with the Arnwoods. My brother were coachman there.

Godolphin: A little tact all round will be necessary — yes —

Thomas: Will be ——?

Godolphin: Would be. But tact is not too difficult for generous people. It is — it would be worth it to prevent much bitterness, Mr. Greenleaf.

Thomas: What's the use of talking as though I was arguing about it? I want no more argument.

Godolphin: I see. Quite so. You've said your last word.

Thomas: I've told you what my last word'll be.

Godolphin: If I had a daughter like yours, Mr. Greenleaf, I wouldn't give her up like that.

Thomas: Who's giving her up?

Godolphin: That's what it comes to.

Thomas: It's her own fault then.

Godolphin: Hardly, as I've pointed out. And that is not really the point, is it? Whose loss will it be?

Thomas: I wish you wouldn't talk like that.

Godolphin: No, it's not an agreeable prospect, is it?

ALICE comes in with coffee and tea, which she puts on the table.

Alice: Have you finished yet?

Thomas: If he 'ad 'is way I'd be finished all right. Finished off.

Godolphin: I'm afraid your husband is not ——

Thomas: Not a poor old fool with no more will than a sheep.

Alice: But can't you understand, Thomas?

Thomas: No, and never shall. And I don't mean to 'ave no ring put in my nose either.

Alice: Breakfast will be here in a moment. Will you take tea or coffee, sir?

Godolphin: Thank you, coffee.

ALICE pours it out for him.

Alice: Thomas, you'll have coffee?

Thomas: No I won't. I'll have tea.

Alice (pouring it out): But you never take tea.

Thomas: Well, I will now.

Godolphin: Quite right, Mr. Greenleaf. Never get fixed in your habits.

Thomas (looking at him, putting down the tea): Give me coffee.

ALICE does so.

JOAN comes in, carrying a dish of bacon and eggs, which she sets down.

Joan: Good-morning, Mr. Godolphin.

Godolphin: Good-morning, Miss Greenleaf.

Joan: Good-morning, Daddy.

Thomas: Good-morning.

Joan (going up to him): Good-morning, Daddy.

Thomas: I said good-morning.

Joan: Yes, but not very nicely.

Thomas: What do you want me to do — sing it?

Joan: Daddy.

Thomas: Oh, very well then. (*He kisses her.*) I don't suppose I behaved too well last night. But understand, my mind's made up.

Joan: That's a pity, because mine is too.

Thomas: How?

Joan: I do love Gerry. I must have done all the time. It's lovely to be in love.

Thomas: So I've heard tell.

They sit down to breakfast. As they do so BEVERLEY comes in, and takes his place at the table.

Beverley: Hullo, everyone. Good-morning. You made an early start, K.C. Coffee, please. (*In an undertone to GODOLPHIN*) Consultation hopeful?

Godolphin: He doesn't know it, but I think so.

Thomas (overhearing them): If you mean did 'e break me down, 'e didn't.

Joan: Mother told me you were discussing us in here.

Thomas: It weren't a discussion, it were a proclamation.

Godolphin: Come now, Mr. Greenleaf.

Thomas: Proclamation long as an Act of Parliament it was.

Beverley (to THOMAS): Well, sir, of course it's not my business ——

Thomas: Who said it was?

Beverley: But I think Gerald is a sportsman.

Thomas: And what do you know about Mr. Gerald?

Beverley: Oh — we've just met, you know.

Thomas: When?

Beverley: Last — up in Scotland — no, it was in Paris.

Joan: Nonsense, Mr. Beverley — tell the truth.

Beverley: Well you see, he came, that is ——

Joan: He came here last night. After you had gone to bed.

Thomas: Here — where?

Beverley: Into my room. Very popular place. Through the window. I called him in. You know, we couldn't let a fellow go off like that.

Thomas (to ALICE): Did you know about this?

Alice: Yes, Joan told me this morning.

Thomas: Did he stay the night?

Godolphin: Don't be ridiculous, my dear sir.

Thomas: Well, it's very kind of you all to inform me.

Joan: He just wanted to see you.

Thomas: I was willing. I wasn't allowed.

Alice: It was much better that you shouldn't see him last night. Mr. Godolphin was quite right.

Godolphin: He is coming round this morning, early.

Thomas: What's he coming here for?

Godolphin: I imagine it's to ask for your permission to marry your daughter.

Thomas: Well, he can save 'is breath.

Godolphin: Precisely. You will tell him that she is not good enough for him.

Thomas: What's that. Who's not good enough?

Joan: Did you say I wasn't good enough for him, Daddy?

Thomas: Who says I said that?

Joan: Do you think I am, then?

Thomas: 'Ere, what are you all trying to put upon me now?

Godolphin: My dear sir, we are only trying to face facts, as you face them.

Thomas: You're not. You're trying to put words into my mouth as was never there.

Joan: But do you or don't you?

Thomas: What?

Joan: Think I'm good enough for Gerry?

Thomas: Who's asking that?

Joan: I am.

Godolphin: Quite right, Miss Greenleaf. The question is in order.

Joan: Because I do, and Gerry does. And if you say I'm not, he won't believe you.

Thomas: I'd like to 'ear 'im or anyone else say it.

Joan: But he's not saying it. You are.

Thomas: Dammit, I'm not. But where are you driving me to? This is no way to look at it.

Alice: I think it's a very proper way.

Thomas: You don't need to interfere.

Alice: Thomas, you're a silly old man. Who should interfere if I shouldn't? I hoped Mr. Godolphin would have made you see reason, but if he hasn't, I must try. Where I was brought up opinions didn't go for much. We had to take life in the rough and use it, and we never knew from one day to another how it would work out. Rule of thumb was no good to us; all our game went by on the wing, fast, without warning. It kept me supple. That's what you've never been. You call yourself a plain man that knows his station, but you're as stiff and full of ceremony as the lion and the unicorn. Joan and Gerald Arnwood are in love with each other. She's a good girl and he's a good lad, and if they want to marry, I say let them. I don't want to lose my daughter.

Thomas: I wish you'd all stop talking about losing her.

Joan: That's what it comes to, Daddy, if you insist. Because I shall marry Gerry.

Beverley: Isn't old Blanquet down yet?

Alice: No. I wonder if he would like breakfast upstairs.

Joan: I'll go and see.

She goes.

Godolphin: Is there any news of my car?

Alice: Martin's sent a message to say they would come up to see you after breakfast.

Godolphin: Thank you. What time is there an Oxford train?

Alice: There's one at ten o'clock.

Godolphin: Can I be taken over for that?

Alice: Yes, sir.

GERALD comes to the door.

Gerald: Oh, I beg your pardon. Haven't you finished breakfast?

Thomas: Can't you see we 'aven't finished breakfast?

Gerald: I beg your pardon ——

Alice: Please come in, Mr. Arnwood.

Gerald: Oh, thank you.

He comes into the room.

Alice: Will you have some coffee?

Gerald: No thank you, I've had breakfast. I mean, yes, please, I should like some coffee very much.

ALICE gives him a cup.

Gerald: Good-morning, Mr. Godolphin — I mean —

Thomas: It's all right — you know 'im.

Gerald: Do I — er, yes. It's a perfectly ripping morning, Mr. Greenleaf.

Thomas: 'Ave you come down here to tell me that?

Gerald: That is — not exactly. No, I came down to see if I might talk to you, Mr. Greenleaf.

Thomas: I can't stop you talking.

Gerald: I'm awfully sorry about what happened last night ——

JOAN returns.

Joan: You're sorry, are you?

Gerald: Hullo, Joan. Of course, I don't mean that. I'm not sorry a bit. I'm only awfully sorry to have offended your father.

Joan: Mr. Blanquet says he'll be down directly.

Alice: Get another cup, will you, dear?

JOAN fetches one, and takes her place again at the table. As she is doing so THOMAS speaks.

Thomas: Never mind about offending me.

Gerald: But I do mind, sir, awfully.

Thomas: Well, what is it you want?

Gerald: Wouldn't it be better if I saw you alone, sir?

Thomas: I think it would be easier for both of us if you said it in public.

Gerald: Then, of course, I want to marry Joan.

Thomas: Her uncle was your father's coachman.

Gerald: I've always heard he was a jolly good coachman, sir.

Thomas: Well, I've no mind for seeing my girl be Lady Arnwood some day.

Gerald: But I think people are getting over the prejudice against titles, aren't they, sir?

Thomas: You all think it's a little thing nowadays, to know your place. I belong to a breed as never did think that. But my time 'as gone, it seems. Well, it's a good time gone, and you'll be 'ard put to it to make your time better. What's the sense in asking me anyway? I'm nobody.

Gerald: Well, of course, sir, we would much rather have your permission.

Godolphin: Very natural.

Thomas: Nobody in this 'ouse is natural — except me.

BLANQUET, very cheap and holding his handkerchief to a cut chin, joins the party. THOMAS rises and goes to the window.

Mr. Blanquet: I'm sorry to be so late, ma'am. I

overslept myself. I'm feeling rather 'eavy this morning. I 'aven't a very steady 'and either. Good-morning, gentlemen.

Alice: Good-morning. I'm afraid you had a very broken night.

Mr. Blanquet: It wasn't all of a piece, as you might say.

Alice: Tea or coffee?

Mr. Blanquet: If I might just 'ave a cup of 'ot water.

Godolphin: A little coffee, Mr. Blanquet, will do you good.

Mr. Blanquet: My stomach don't want any good doing to it just now. It wants to be left alone.

He takes his cup of water to the fireplace, where he inspects his cut chin in the looking-glass.

Thomas (to GERALD): Have you spoken to Sir Robert about this?

Gerald: Yes, sir, I told him this morning. Of course, he's known for a long time how keen I've been, but we haven't discussed it.

Thomas: What does he say?

Gerald: Well, sir, I brought him down with me. He said he'd better see you. He's outside now. May I bring him in?

Thomas: What, with all these things about?

Gerald: Oh, that's all right, sir.

He goes out. ALICE and JOAN take some of the dishes and plates away. BEVERLEY is finishing his toast, as GODOLPHIN rises and joins BLANQUET.

Godolphin: Allow me.

He takes a small book of plaster from his

pocket, cuts a piece off, and applies it to BLANQUET'S chin.

Mr. Blanquet: I'm much obliged. Is there any on my collar?

Godolphin: No.

ALICE comes back into the room, followed by JOAN.

Alice (to GODOLPHIN): The man from Martin's is here, sir.

Godolphin: Oh, thank you.

GERALD comes in with his father. SIR ROBERT ARNWOOD is an agreeable, good-looking country gentleman of fifty-five.

Sir Robert: Good-morning, Mrs. Greenleaf. Good-morning, Joan. Mr. Greenleaf, I must apologise for this early call.

Thomas: Good-morning, sir.

Gerald: Father, this is Mr. Godolphin.

Sir Robert: Mr. Ambrose Godolphin?

Godolphin: Yes.

Sir Robert: Delighted.

Gerald: Mr. Beverley. They're taking Clifton Court.

Sir Robert: Good-morning.

Gerald (to BLANQUET): I'm afraid I don't know ——

Mr. Blanquet: Blanquet — q-u-e-t. Good-morning, Sir Robert. Yes, I've cut myself. Clumsy, wasn't it?

Godolphin: If you'll excuse me — I have to see a man about my car.

He goes out.

Beverley: I'll just go and pack my bag.

He follows.

Mr. Blanquet: I must look after my things too.

(To ALICE) 'E don't seem quite so stubborn this morning.

He goes.

Alice: Won't you sit down, sir?

Sir Robert: Yes, let us sit down.

He, ALICE and THOMAS take seats; JOAN and GERALD remain standing.

Sir Robert: I understand my son wants to marry your daughter.

Thomas: I'd have you to know, Sir Robert, as it is none of my doing. I'm agin it. Dead agin it I am.

Sir Robert: Quite so.

Gerald: But, Father ——

Sir Robert: If you please, Gerald. May I ask Mr. Greenleaf, what are your precise objections?

Thomas: Your people and mine, Sir Robert, have stood side by side on this ground in their rightful places from away back in history. I can't get over that, and I don't want to try.

Sir Robert: A very proper view to take. You think that it would be out of place for your family to ——

Gerald: But I say, look here, Father ——

Sir Robert: Be quiet, Gerald. Mr. Greenleaf is quite right. He naturally considers that his daughter ought to look rather to her own station. He must suppose that I should expect my son to do the same.

Gerald: What are you talking about, Father? Joan, I don't ——

Joan: Please, not another word about it, Gerry. If your father feels that, you are free to call it off at once.

Gerald: Of course it can't be called off. And you said this morning, Father ——

Sir Robert: Never mind what I said. Mr. Greenleaf's view is a very reasonable one, and I respect him for it. I feel just as he does. You ought to make no match that is not worthy of your position.

Thomas: Yes, but look 'ere, are you suggesting that there's anything wrong with my daughter?

Sir Robert: By no means. I am merely considering her eligibility as my son's wife.

Thomas: She's not good enough, is that it? Well, let me tell you, Sir Robert, and you can excuse my plain manner of speaking, he might go a 'ell of a sight further and fare a 'ell of a sight worse.

Alice: I think, sir, you might have spared us this indignity.

Gerald: Really, Mrs. Greenleaf, I'm most awfully sorry ——

Sir Robert: But the position is none of my making, Mrs. Greenleaf. When my son told me of his proposal, I could not ignore it, however much I might disapprove of it.

Gerald: But you were quite decent about it then ——

Sir Robert: I could not, and do not, blame you for falling in love. Violent measures in such cases are useless. Before saying anything definite, I wished to ascertain whether Mr. Greenleaf's views conformed with my own. I find that they do.

Thomas: Who says they do? You think your son can play fast and loose with my girl like that, and then turn round and tell 'er she's beneath 'im ——

Gerald: But I'm doing nothing of the sort, sir.

Thomas: Your father is, that's the same thing.

Sir Robert: But you are mistaken. It was you yourself who first placed the matter in that light.

Thomas: I? Never.

Sir Robert: You objected to the marriage.

Thomas: Well?

Sir Robert: On what grounds?

Thomas: Because she's not — well, damme, it isn't right.

Sir Robert: She's not — what?

Thomas: If you're trying to make me say because she's not good enough for him, you can't do it.

Sir Robert: Then you think she is?

Thomas: I've been come at by everyone with that question. Why be I persecuted like this? And what does it matter anyway — what you've said can't be mended.

Sir Robert: I have said only that I should oppose any unworthy match for my son. Which you think your daughter would be.

Thomas: Will you stop saying that? I do not.

Sir Robert: Ah, splendid. Now we can talk.

Thomas: What's that?

Sir Robert: Because I do not either.

Thomas: What did I say? You've gone and legged me up, that's what you've done. I don't know what I am saying. And what do you mean — you don't either?

Sir Robert: I came here to say that. Your first word convinced me that it would be unwise to say it directly — so I employed a little stratagem to make you agree with me. You will forgive me.

Thomas: Where am I now? Have I given my consent?

Sir Robert: I hope now to be able to persuade you to do so.

Thomas: Everyone is set on making me give way.

Sir Robert: When we are passing middle age, Mr. Greenleaf, that is our privilege. It is one that is, perhaps, too rarely exercised.

Thomas: I don't 'old with young folks knowing better than their elders myself. But it seems I'm wrong.

Joan: Not better, Daddy, except for themselves.

Gerald: You see, sir, what we feel about it is that if we have got to make mistakes, we would rather make our own than somebody else's.

Thomas: It's my pride that's threatened. A man's pride ought to be valued, it did.

Sir Robert: We Arnwoods are as proud as you are, Mr. Greenleaf. The changes in the world today make much uncertain that seemed fixed against change. What may come to all our ways of life can be foreseen now, perhaps, less than at any time in the past. I have but one desire. It is to hand on my Arnwood name to stock as good as that from which I came. I want it to be a brave, clean, happy stock. And if your girl will marry my boy, I know of no likelier way of realising my ambition.

Joan (going up to him): That's terribly nice of you, Sir Robert. I hope I'm worth it.

Sir Robert: You may rely on me not to have taken any risks about that, young lady.

Joan: Thank you.

She goes back to GERALD.

Thomas (rising): Sir Robert, I'm surprised at you. I looked to you for right judgment on this, same as mine.

Sir Robert: We've seen that it is the same, haven't we? Come now, I respect your scruples, Mr. Greenleaf. As I know you would respect mine — if I had any. But you see, I haven't. I think the proposal is in all ways a very suitable one. My family is honoured. I wish you could feel yours to be also.

Thomas: Of course, if you go on talking like that you take an advantage of me. I want to fight this, and nobody this blessed day'll let me fight. There's Mr. Godolphin there been at me two hours this morning so as I 'ardly knew what I did think. And now you say things as look as though I ought to be ashamed of myself for 'aving principles.

Sir Robert: Not at all, not at all. But we all have principles —

Thomas: That's what 'e said.

Sir Robert: Quite so. Moreover, there's this. If we refused, we should, I think, do no more than lose an affection that I for one, Mr. Greenleaf, cannot afford to lose.

Thomas: That's enough about that, Sir Robert. I've been thinking of that ever since I got up this morning — ever since I went to bed last night. And now you tell me the same thing. (*He moves to the window, and stands looking out; then turns, and looks at them all for a moment in silence.*) Very well then, do as you like. I've no more to say.

Joan (going to him): Daddy, you're going to be real friends?

Thomas: I'll tell 'ee, girl, plain. I thought I'd spunk enough to lose 'ee altogether, if it came to that. Well, I find I haven't. I couldn't bear it, and so you've beaten me.

Gerald: Please, sir, you'll find I'm not half as bad as you think.

Sir Robert: What is your opinion of Toplands Farm, Mrs. Greenleaf? It's empty. Wouldn't it suit them very well?

Thomas: Perhaps they'd rather choose their own 'ouse.

Gerald: Oh no, sir. Anything anyone would like to suggest. We've got all we want.

Alice: I've always liked Toplands. Such a friendly-looking house.

Sir Robert: Yes. It has a curious history. It was built by Sir Basil Arnwood in 1632 for his eldest son — he was Gerald — to take his young wife home to. The boy was killed ten years later at Edgehill. The old man was still alive, and he left a spell, that he supposed could never be broken. It has come down in the family, thus:

‘In Topland never shall
An heir of Arnwood dwell
Till beauty walketh there
In green leaf all the year.’

Joan: But how lovely.

Sir Robert: Till beauty walketh there in green leaf all the year. A charming conclusion to a superstition, is it not, Joan?

Joan: Do you think he would pass me for beauty?

Gerald: I should think he jolly well would. The Arnwoods have always had taste anyway. And now, sir, we've only got to fix the day.

Thomas: Damn it, young man, don't ask me to fix the day. She's equal to doing all the fixing that's wanted.

Sir Robert: As soon as they like. Gerald is looking after the estate altogether now, so he can be said to be earning his own living. Well, good-morning — good-morning, Mrs. Greenleaf. You'll have to come and look over things a bit at Bell Croft — I've no one to do much for me in that way since — ah, well — good-morning. Are you coming, Gerald?

Gerald: I shall be up at lunch-time. I have to go over to Ciceter.

Thomas: Go where?

Gerald: Oh yes, really this time, sir. Will you come, Joan?

Joan: May I, Daddy?

Thomas: I don't want any of your impertinence. You can go and call it out from top of Ciceter tower if you've a mind to. I don't never issue no commandments, any more. I'll see you out, Sir Robert.

They go out together.

Joan: Mother, you have been a darling.

Gerald: Yes, you have been, Mrs. Greenleaf. May I kiss you?

He does so. GODOLPHIN comes in.

Godolphin: A very proper proceeding, young man.

Joan: It's all settled, Mr. Godolphin.

Alice: Thanks a great deal to you, sir. And Sir Robert did the rest.

Godolphin: I was sanguine about it. Very satisfactory. My congratulations.

Gerald: It was jolly good of you to take all that trouble, sir.

Godolphin: Taking trouble is my vocation.

Alice: The trap will be ready in a few minutes, sir.

Godolphin: Thank you. I will get my bag.

He goes up. ALICE goes out towards the yard.

Gerald (kissing her): Joan, you blessed sweetheart.

Joan: I'm so happy, Gerry.

BLANQUET comes in carrying his bag, a small black one.

Mr. Blanquet: I beg your pardon — I can easy go outside and wait.

Gerald: Come in, Mr. Blanquet. It's all right.

Mr. Blanquet: I'd just as well wait outside.

BEVERLEY joins them, also with his bag, a substantial kit.

Beverley (speaking through the bar): Oh, Mrs. Greenleaf, I'll leave this here. I shall be back from Clifton Court about twelve. Can I be driven to the one o'clock train?

Alice (coming in): Yes, certainly.

Beverley: All's well, I take it.

Mr. Blanquet: Anyone can feel that. I knew it would be.

GODOLPHIN comes back with a small suit case.

At the same moment THOMAS returns and goes to the fireplace.

Godolphin: Well, well. And now, Mrs. Greenleaf, if you will kindly let me have my bill.

Thomas: What do you get for talking for three hours in a law court, sir?

Godolphin: I beg your pardon?

Thomas: Well, whatever it is, your fee is more than my bill. There isn't any bill.

Godolphin: But really, I can't allow ——

Thomas: Be I never going to 'ave my way about anything?

Godolphin: It's extremely kind of you ——

Thomas: If you gentlemen hadn't turned up last night, I should very like 'ave been mad by now. Not but what I am mad as it is. It isn't much we've been able to offer, but I don't want to 'ear nothing about no bills.

Beverley: But really, Mr. Greenleaf, I've got no professional value at all ——

Mr. Blanquet: 'Ere, I say, I can't go sponging on people ——

Thomas: Of course, if you're all too proud ——

Mr. Blanquet: Oh, no, I ain't proud.

Alice: We really should be very happy, gentlemen, if you would let us remember you as our guests.

Godolphin: We should be enchanted.

Gerald: And Joan and I hope awfully you'll all come to the wedding. Will you? What address will find you, sir?

Godolphin: Lincoln's Inn.

Gerald (to BEVERLEY): Clifton Court. (*To BLANQUET*) And you, sir?

Mr. Blanquet (producing a card): I'm sorry it's a sardine one — the only one I've got.

Beverley: And I say, Arnwood, you ought to ask Annette.

Joan: Yes, rather. (*To GERALD*) That's Mr. Blanquet's daughter.

Mr. Blanquet: Would you reely? Of course, I've never been to a first-class wedding before, not with a proper invite. But I think I should be quite all right if Annette could come.

Gerald: Then we may look forward to meeting again.

Mr. Blanquet: Thank you very much, I'm sure.

Alice: I think that's your trap, sir.

Godolphin: Ah yes; well, good-morning —

Alice: You pass within two fields of Clifton Court, if Mr. Beverley —

Godolphin: Charming, if he will allow me.

Beverley: I meant to walk, but I like your company, K.C. Thank you.

Godolphin: Yes, very encouraging of you. (*Shaking hands*) Good-morning, Mr. Greenleaf — madam. (*To JOAN*) I think that perhaps, after all, I will claim a fee — then come kiss me sweet and twenty. (*She does so.*) Mr. Arnwood, you know better than I can tell you that you're a very lucky young man. Good-morning. Are you ready, Beverley?

He goes to the door and waits. ALICE gets his hat.

Beverley: Yes. (*To THOMAS*) Good-day, sir. You must meet my governor — you'll get on no end together. (*To JOAN and GERALD*) Good luck. I'm so glad. (*To ALICE — from whom he also takes his hat*) Thank you. Good-day.

He stands just below GODOLPHIN at the door.

Godolphin: I suppose we can't give you a lift, Mr. Blanquet?

Mr. Blanquet: Well, I 'ave a customer along at

Popping Mill. That's on your way, I think. But there won't 'ardly be room for all of us. I don't matter a bit, reely.

Alice: There's plenty of room for two behind.

Mr. Blanquet: Thank you, then. (*To THOMAS*) Good-morning. I'm sure Annette would say as you 'ad done right.

Thomas: I'll see you off.

He goes towards the yard.

Mr. Blanquet (*to JOAN*): Annette is altogether different from me, you know. Good-day, Mr. Arnwood. (*He shakes hands with both. Then to ALICE*) Good-morning, ma'am, I wish p'raps some day we could go and see a circus together. Thank you.

He takes his hat too, and stands for a moment by BEVERLEY. In the bar THOMAS has started the gramophone with 'The Belle of New York.'

Godolphin: Come along then. A most agreeable tune.

Joan: I say, you've all been perfectly splendid.

Gerald: See you all again soon.

Joan: Rather!

Godolphin: Rather!

The three file out, led by GODOLPHIN, BLANQUET third. ALICE follows them.

Gerald: People are jolly good, aren't they?

Joan: Of course they are.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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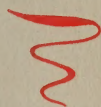


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